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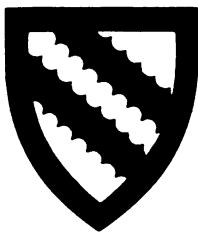
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**THE
ETERNAL FEMININE
AND OTHER STORIES**



The audience was caught off its feet; the Celtic dash of the girl made her words inflammable.

[Page 87]

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS

ILLUSTRATED

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Fine money

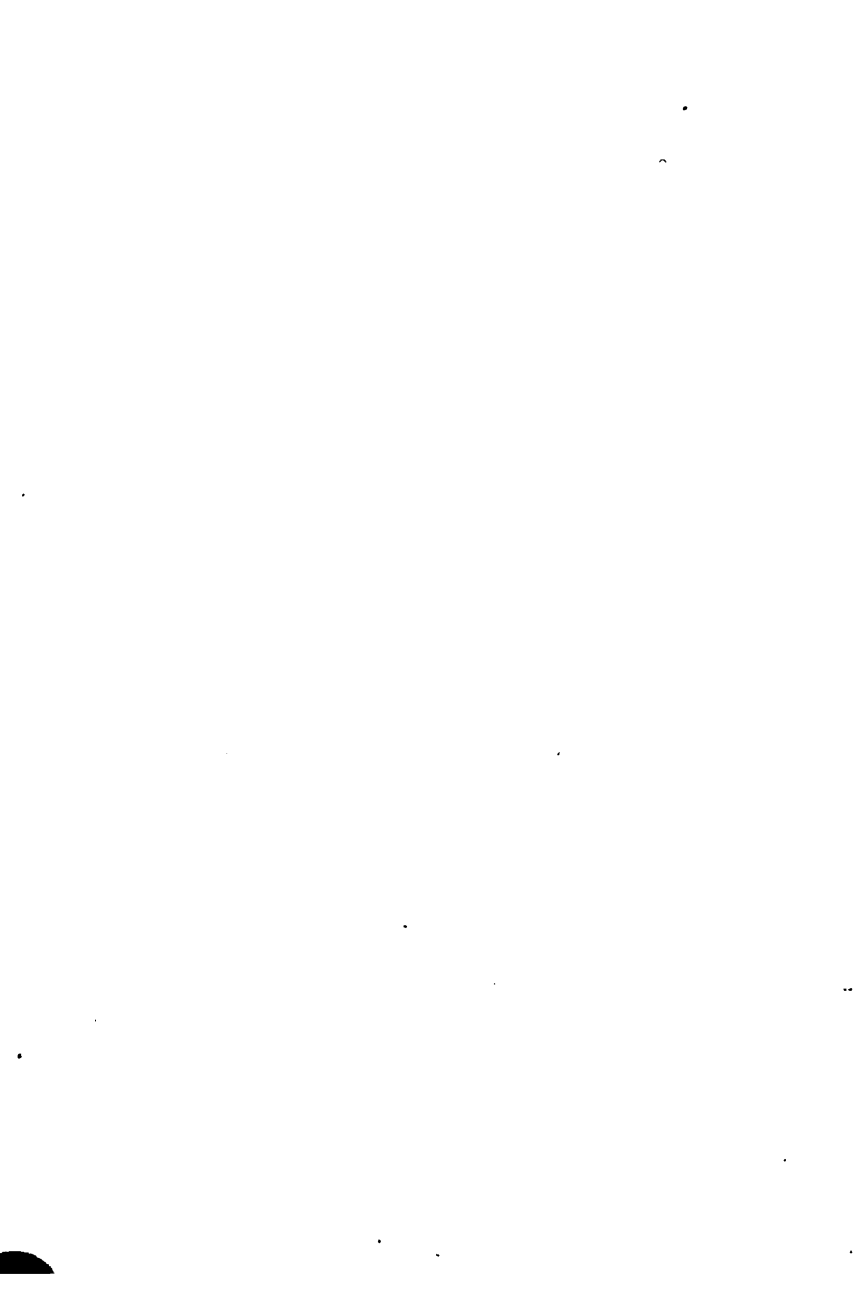
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HER FLING

HER FLING

"IS it really Evelyn Garden?" The gloved hand waved to the figure across the city street. "She looks so pretty and well groomed that I didn't suspect her of being herself." The woman laughed, not ill-naturedly; she went on: "That sort of little person makes me a bit tired. What right has she to be colorless? She has all the qualities for being alive, and she isn't! She's intelligent enough, and kindly, heaven knows; yes, and good-looking if she took the trouble to dress herself—those long, thin lines and the huge black eyes in her Mona Lisa face. Also, she has a mighty attractive husband."

The other woman answered thoughtfully, following with her gaze the slender form disappearing down Main Street.

"Perhaps that's her trouble."

"What do you mean? John Garden's perfectly kind to her, isn't he?"

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"Oh, yes—kind! Oh, yes!" She hesitated as though trying to phrase a subtlety. "But he's such a triumphant person, with his brilliant success and his big good looks, and that winning way of his which makes him always the ladies' pet; that—Well, I like to go out to dinner with John Garden, but I think he could be trying as a husband. It would take a woman with lots of assertion not to be colorless beside him."

"Maybe," the other agreed. "But, anyhow, Evelyn might take the trouble to wear decent clothes; she has piles of money of her own. However, they're going in a month. Come into Curran's—they've got a new lot of hats."

Evelyn Garden went on, walking rapidly toward home. It was a cool day and the pace freshened her face and made her dark eyes shine. She was forty-two; but as she turned in at her own gate, slim and bright-eyed, she might almost have been twenty. A man coming away from her door glanced at her, hesitated, and stopped.

"Miss Garden?" he said.

"Oh, no!" She looked younger still. "Oh, no!"

HER FLING

I'm Mrs. Garden. Did you want to see—my daughter?"

To her surprise, it was an effort to bring out those two words that placed her in her own class, in the older generation. Usually such an idea did not occur to her; she was used to being the quiet mother of big, handsome Martha. But it was suddenly pleasant to have this stranger look at her as he was looking—as though she were a person, not merely an older person. Then she waited to see the friendly, interested expression die out as he realized that she was Martha's mother. Astonishingly it did not die out. The very good-looking young man seemed confused, but laughed as though also amused.

"You—you deceived me, Mrs. Garden. I didn't dream—I supposed you were Miss Garden's sister. I think I should have guessed—younger sister." His flattering eyes just took in, with a brief, deferential glance, the slimness of the smart figure. Martha was tall and a bit bulky for a girl. He went on: "I am one of the lower slaves in Compton University—the assistant in economics, under Doctor Garden. We're looking forward to your coming. My name is

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Carr. I met Miss Garden at commencement, and as I spoke of being here she asked me to call. So I did. And I'm sorry to say she's not at home. Will you tell her I am sorry, please?"

"Oh, but—" She remembered that Martha was to be out to lunch. "Yes, she is away," Mrs. Garden admitted; and then ideas flashed.

Ask him in to lunch with herself and John? It was near lunch-time; it was inhospitable not to keep him. Would he be bored? Martha's beaux in general would not think of talking to Martha's parents for an hour. But at least one could ask him? He actually looked as though he would not be bored. Yet, if he had no excuse and— Oh, nonsense; this man could escape if he chose!

Her face was filled with a play of expression; she would have been astonished to know how charming, how girlish, she looked as she stood, hesitating, by the border of tall flowers, in the new frock she had bought at O'Hara's so hurriedly, which Martha had said was of too youthful a cut for her and which she had been shy about wearing. The tall young man waited, smiling.

HER FLING

"I'm sorry my daughter's not at home; but"— she caught her breath with fright—"but couldn't you come in and lunch with Mr. Garden and me? If—if you haven't any other engagement?"

"If I had I'd throw it over," the pleasant, hearty young voice answered instantly. "And I haven't. I'll be delighted to lunch with you."

The telephone rang as they entered the house.

"Yes, John. Oh! Oh! You won't be home? Oh, no; nothing wrong. Very well. Good-by."

At four o'clock Jim Carr sprang to his feet. The chimes in the hall were dying away. "Not possibly four! And I had an engagement at half past three!" He towered over her as he took her hand. "I don't know when I've had such a good time! Why, you see, it was disgraceful to stay so; but I didn't know." Fresh-colored and big and joyous, he was laughing with a winning embarrassment. "You'll let me come as soon as you get to Compton?"

"Oh, yes." Mrs. Garden's eyes were shining and her face was full of life; nobody could have called

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her colorless just now. "Martha will be so glad to see you."

The laughing, tall young man hesitated.

"I'll be glad to meet Miss Garden again," he said; "but—I'm coming to see you!" There was a second's dead silence. Evelyn Garden stared at him. "Mayn't I?" he asked gently, as though not to frighten her.

"Oh—yes," she answered.

"And we're going to ride—you'll get it back in a week; and you know we're all dancing, just the same as everywhere." She laughed then, alarmed but pleased; and with that he let her hand go. "Good-by. I don't want to go." He had gone.

When Martha came in her mother was sitting, oddly bright-eyed and smiling, looking into the fire.

"Why, little mother-person!" exclaimed Martha. "What are you doing here—doing nothing? I know. You're planning clothes for me to astonish the natives at Compton. Aren't you?"

"No, I was not, dear," the woman answered slowly. "To tell the truth, I'm just deciding that I'll have a habit and ride at Compton."

HER FLING

"You—ride, mother?"

"I think I will. I used to love it."

"But, mother dearie, will you have time? The boys—they need so much looking after."

"Why not? Other women keep house and look after their children, and yet—are alive."

"Of course, dearie, if you really can do it; but it's so long since—and father can't be counted on to ride with you often. And I was just going to tell you—the Amorys asked me to-day to go to California for three months. Next week! Couldn't I? I'm crazy to do it. It's such an opportunity—their private car, you know. I never could have a better chance. And then, you see, I shouldn't be home to ride with you; that's what I was thinking."

"If you went I could ride Rebel."

This attitude of her mother puzzled Martha Garden.

"Why, of course," she agreed, a bit displeased unaccountably; certainly she would lend her horse to her mother when she did not need him.

"If you think you can handle him. He's a live horse."

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"Yes," Mrs. Garden answered slowly. "And maybe I am a live woman. Sometimes I wonder."

"Mother dear, what are you talking about?" Martha threw back impatiently. "You're not like yourself. Has anything bothered you?"

"Not a bit!" And then: "A friend of yours was here—Mr. Carr, from Compton."

"Oh!" Martha squealed it girlwise. "Jim Carr! I am so disappointed! I met him only once and I just loved him. He's the winner up there at Compton. Isn't he attractive? Did you see him, mother?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Garden; "I saw him. I met him coming out. I asked him to lunch."

"You did!" Martha's eyebrows lifted. "Why, you saucy little mother-person. He didn't come, I gather."

"Yes, he came."

"Oh, heavings!" Martha mourned. "With you and father—Jim Carr and you and father!"

"Worse than that, Martha. Your father didn't get home."

Martha looked highly amused. She was not a subtle character, and it was easy to follow her

HER FLING

thought—that it was a joke on the glorious Mr. Carr to have lunch with an elderly lady alone. But her next words were civil.

“I think that was very cosey,” said Martha politely. “And I’m proud to have Mr. Carr see what a perfectly good mother I have.” Then: “I suppose he left soon after?”

“He went at just four.”

“Four!” the girl squealed again; she was given to the simple emphasis of squeals. “Four! And I came in at ten after. Oh, darn!” She reflected a moment. “I suppose he was hoping I might get home,” she explained then with unconsciousness, and continued: “Well, I’ll play with him a lot when we’re living there. He’s to be father’s understrapper—whatever you call them—you know. I suppose he’ll be at the house constantly. Mother dear, I want a new evening dress to take off with the Amorys. Will you go with me to-morrow and help choose it? I think blue.”

“I’m glad you chose blue; I’m going to order a pink one.”

Martha bounded.

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"Mother! Pink! Why, you always wear shades of mauve—or else black and white. And a new riding-habit! What has got into you? I believe it's that dress you're wearing that started you." She put her head to one side and appraised Mrs. Garden critically. "I don't like you in that dress. Why, mother, with your long, thin lines and your sloping shoulders, and your head deep in that Curran hat, you don't look a day over eighteen."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Garden. "And you object?"

"Object!" Martha was surprised. "Mother dear, of course I object. It isn't dignified. And a pink evening dress! You said the mother of a grown-up daughter——"

"I did," acknowledged Mrs. Garden; "but I'm not going to order this dress for your mother. Only for myself—Evelyn Garden; not decrepit yet, and with—with a desire for a little—fling."

"Fling? Mother! Did I hear you say 'fling'?" "Your fling!" Martha's interjections were a series of squeals.

Suddenly the woman was standing before the big girl.

HER FLING

"Listen, Martha!" And Martha listened with her mouth wide open. "When I was a girl," began her mother, "I didn't have a good time. There was plenty of money, but my father and mother didn't approve of dancing; I never went to a ball. Pretty clothes were frowned on; it wasn't thought creditable for me even to enjoy myself. I was kept studying and doing charity work. The only pleasure I had was my riding. They were Presbyterians of the strictest sort.

"Then I was married at twenty-one, and you came; and I thought I had to spend all my time between you and the housekeeping. Your father liked me first because, he said—he said my Spanish eyes and my Quaker looks were piquant; but he forgot the Spanish and remembered the Quaker. He wanted me that way apparently—Quakerish—clothes and all. I thought so. I wonder whether I was wrong? So I kept to my black and white and mauves. He seemed to expect to do the color and enthusiasm. I had a terror of self-assertion; so I let him.

"I settled down; it's an awful thing to do—to settle down. Soon nobody expected anything of me

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except as background for your father. If I ever said anything of my own initiative people looked startled. They do now; your father does. I suppose he loves me in a way, but in his heart he thinks me dull." A gesture of displeasure from Martha. "Oh, of course, he wouldn't acknowledge it, even to himself. But he does—everybody does."

She reflected a second and smiled.

"Almost everybody. Well, we're going to begin a new life in a new place, and it has come to me that I won't begin it this way—this spiritless, suppressed way. I'll start fresh. I'm human; I'm a person—not just a machine to look after you and father and the boys." Her tone was pleading. "I'll be a live woman and get the joy of living, and give it. It came to me this afternoon. So I'm going to ride and I'm going to have a pink evening dress." She faced her daughter defiantly. "And other things, too," she threw at her.

"Oh, Martha"—she threw out her arms with an appeal of woman to woman, not of mother to child—"do see! All these years I've been nothing but a foundation to build your lives on—you children and

HER FLING

your father. And I want a little living of my own. You're grown up; you ought to understand. Try to understand. I want my—fling!" She laughed a little.

The big, handsome young girl in the deep chair stared, dumfounded.

"Yes, mother, I'm grown up"—she spoke with elaborate gentleness—"but I don't understand. Not at your age, dear. It seems to me that to hear you talk about having a fling—it's indecent! I always thought you were so happy with father and Jacky and Jimmy and me. Surely you have a great deal to be thankful for! We're all well and intelligent and good-looking—such a nice family for you. It's not like you to be discontented. Don't you think"—she got up then and put her arm about her mother's shoulder, looming over her—"don't you think you ought to be satisfied with what God has sent you?" The girl was evidently deeply moved with her own noble attitude.

For a second the room was still, and then Mrs. Garden suddenly laughed. She loosened the arm about her and stood away from Martha.

"You don't understand in the least," she said,

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and went on: "Yes, you may have your trip to California and you may have the blue evening dress. We'll see about it in the morning. There are some letters for you, Martha, in the hall." She moved to the door.

"Mother!" the girl called softly.

"Yes?"

"If you really are going to have a pink dress, won't you have it a dull old-rose—to please me, mother?"

On an afternoon in November about half past four a taxicab shot up Doctor John Garden's driveway in Compton. From it emerged Martha Garden, much approving the approach to her new home, much pleased with herself for arriving twenty-four hours earlier than her schedule and so giving the family a joyful surprise.

The door flew open.

"I'm Miss Garden," she announced to the new butler. "My mother is at home?"

"No, miss," the man said. "But Mrs. Garden will be in at five. Tea is ordered for five."

HER FLING

"Oh!"

That was annoying; she had had a picture of dear little home-staying mother sewing away up-stairs and of radiant, long-lost daughter's sudden smiling apparition; whereupon ecstasy and tears of joy!

Tea at five? Mother never used to have tea alone; she must have had an intuition that radiant daughter was near. That was well. The two small brothers, who received her with the indifference of ten and twelve masculine years, were the only members of the family she could lay hands on; the arrival was not so dramatic as she had arranged. Too bad of mother to be out to-day! With that, after inspecting her own chintz-bright quarters, after questions to the boys, who gave laconic and unsatisfying answers, behold, there were horses' hoofs on the gravelled drive!

Martha flew to the window. How nice if some of the Compton young people had seen her in the taxi and had dashed in to welcome her! That was it! Three men and a girl, and the man on the black horse was Jim Carr. How adorable of him! Who was the girl? Very sportsmanlike she looked in

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her smart, dark-gray habit with the russet country boots.

“My word! But she rides—that girl, Jimmy!”

The boys crowded beside her to watch the scene—the background of November woodland with its trim border of bare shrubs, white-dotted with snow-berries, red-dotted with Indian currants; the broad, groomed driveway; the riders pulling in their horses. The three men slid off their mounts to hurry to the gray horse, where the girl——

“Why, that’s Rebel!” Martha almost shouted. “Jimmy, who’s the girl riding my horse?”

Jimmy turned with a sarcastic grin to his dreadnought on the floor.

“The girl is mother,” he answered briefly, and added: “She rides Rebel lots better than you do.”

Martha was reserved in her greeting when she met her mother at the foot of the stairs, her mother tumbling into the house, laughing at her own stumble on the step, followed by three laughing cavaliers.

“Why, Martha!” Mrs. Garden brought up suddenly. Everybody seemed struck silent. The whole

HER FLING

atmosphere changed in that second. "I thought you said to-morrow."

With that Martha was kissed and patted and for a moment was, as was fitting, the centre of things.

"Are you tired? Are you starving? Sit down, child, and wait, and everything will come to you. Mr. Carr, don't be lazy! The tea will be ready in a minute; but feed her cakes meantime. Mr. Arbuthnot, lift the kettle. Quick!"

Martha gasped. Was it mother chattering away to the men, ordering them about? She had made up her mind on the stairs to investigate the astounding reasons as to why mother was riding with three cavaliers; but this was more, a thousand times more and worse. Mother, talking exactly as though she were sure the men wanted to fetch and carry at her bidding! What was the matter? Martha decided that she would assert her supremacy of youth and put mother in her place. She rose from the big chair into which she had been shoved by those rebellious maternal hands and moved to the tea-table.

"Mother dear, you must be tired! I'll pour the tea."

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She put out her hand, with a sweet but firm smile, to help the elder from her chair; and the elder slapped it. Slapped it! Not hard, naturally; just a swift, snappy little slap that was—Martha realized it with rage—distinctly attractive. The men laughed.

“Get away, Martha! You don’t know how. You don’t know how many lumps Mr. Carr takes, even. And Mr. Graham has to have his last, because he likes lye. You don’t know that. Be quiet—and wait until you’re fed.”

Two of the men left together when they had swallowed the tea; but Jim Carr stayed—Jim Carr, who really was, as Martha had stated, the winner at Compton. Big, with fresh manliness and simplicity; with hard work and success already back of him at twenty-nine; with a brilliant future prophesied—he did not have to lift a finger to be easily the leader in most companies.

Martha began to be fascinating at him—not to him, but at him—when the decks were cleared by the two departures. The curious feeling which had oppressed her, that somehow she was second to her own mother, would now disappear, she was con-

HER FLING

vinced. She started in to fascinate Carr; but the siren song did not seem to work.

He listened to tales of the Golden West with impressive attention certainly; but was it possible that now and again she caught his eyes wandering to the slim figure in the dark habit and little, alluring, manly boots; to the luminous eyes which smiled across the tea-table, shining into the firelight? Was it possible? After the third mishap of this kind Martha rose up.

"Mother, if you and Mr. Carr will excuse me"—she spoke with deep sarcasm—"I think I'll go upstairs. I'm a little tired."

So! She would punish him. She would leave him alone with just mother. Mother came out from her firelight, smiling revery with a start.

"Oh, are you tired, Martha? How selfish of me not to send you before. Go, then, dear; and Josephine will see to you and unpack you, and I'll be up"—she laughed—"as soon as the man goes. He's not to stay to dinner to-night."

Martha's head swam; she held to the rail as she went up the stairs.

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Jim Carr came and stood by the table and looked down. In the shifting lights and shadows of the fire the huge, dark eyes were the only things that seemed fixed.

"So I'm not to stay?" He knew Mrs. Garden rather well, it appeared.

"No"—smiling still; not even lifting her eyes from the logs. She knew him well, also, it appeared.

"I wouldn't stay if you asked me." There was no laughter in the words; rather an intensity which made her look up.

"Why?"

Instead of answering he swung restlessly up and down the room, then halted before her.

"Don't you know?"

The Spanish eyes were wide and truthful as they gazed up at him—troubled as well.

"Don't you know?" he repeated.

"No." Her straight gaze met his.

He stood before her, splendid in youth and strength, struggling miserably. Then he stooped swiftly and caught her hands.

"It's no use," he whispered. "I give up! I meant

HER FLING

never to tell you; but, oh, I have to! It's too strong for me. I love you! I love you!"

Quickly she was standing; and the fingers he had held were holding his, gripping them tightly, keeping him, with that tense, gentle clasp, at a distance.

"Jim!" She stared at him; not angry, not glad—astounded.

The fire sputtered noisily into the stillness as they stared at each other. Then:

"You are angry?" he asked.

"No. Dear Jim!" Silence. Then: "It's my fault," she said. "I didn't see. I'll never forgive myself!"

He threw up his head like a spirited horse when struck with a whip.

"You don't—care?"

"Care? Yes! Desperately. But I don't—she caught her breath and faced him steadily—"I don't love you, Jim—that way. I only love John."

Most women have to learn what it is to put a knife into a man who is offering his heart's blood. It is about as pleasant, probably, as suicide. Evelyn Garden, at forty-two, after twenty-one years of

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marriage, knew for the first time. Carr freed his hands and whirled.

"I'll go," he said.

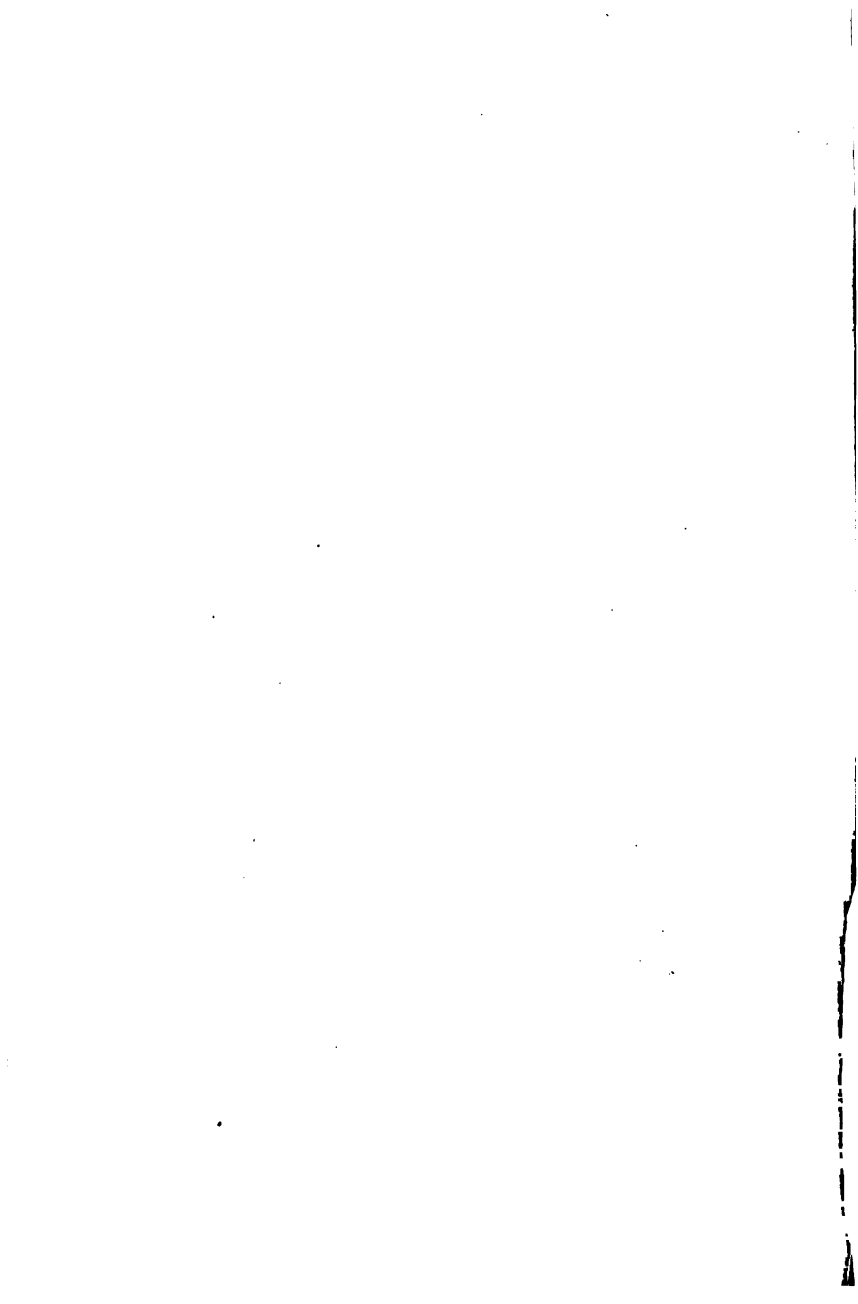
She did not let him go, however. She made him sit by her in the firelight; and she held his hand, though she would not let him hold hers, and told him how she could not give him up; how he had been an inspiration from the moment when she had met him coming out of her old home—the inspiration of a joy of life that might not have come to her otherwise. She told him how his friendship had certainly brought most of her opportunities, most of her friends, in Compton; how he had given her a new point of view, put her clock back for years; how the rock wall of his loyalty had been a thing she had counted on more and more every day for three months.

"I can't get on without you." The clear, honest look of her held him. "Won't you wipe this off the slate, Jim? It could never mean happiness, anyway. And forget you said it? And stay? Won't you stay always and be friends?"

He bent and kissed the hand that held his, and laughed a little, though his eyes were dim.



She did not let him go, however.



HER FLING

"You are the sweetest thing in the world!" he said brokenly. "Yes; I'll stay. Of course! Any way you'll have me. If you asked me to stay in the capacity of butler I'd probably do it."

She laughed too, then, and caught at the word of commonplace.

"No, thank you, sir. No highbrow butlers butting around me! Rollins is good enough." And then breathlessly, whisperingly, in short sentences punctuated much like the Psalter: "I'll never forget: That you cared: I didn't dream: And me one hundred years older! Some day: You'll think me: An old lady, with gray side curls: And maybe I'll be! But I'll have this wonderful thing: To remember: Always!"

There was a minute's hush in the warm, bright room, and then:

"You'd better go now," she said in an every-day tone. "Jim, it's the dancing class to-night at the Sturgises'; you'll go?"

He hesitated, wheeled, staggered to the wall, and put his head against it in his hands. So he stood for a long moment; then turned about unsteadily.

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

"Yes; I'll go," he said, trying to smile. "I'll go—to the dancing class. God bless you!"

And, as she stood looking with wet eyes at the place where he had been, the dancing class and the benediction did not seem so very incongruous.

Half an hour later Evelyn Garden, dressing for dinner, had a thought. She stood a moment considering, then crossed the room and gave a number over the telephone. There was a knock at her door. "Come in!" she said, and sat down on the bed by the telephone-stand, her red-brown hair over her shoulders, her satiny white kimono, slashed with gorgeous embroidered color, glistening about her—a pleasant object to the eyes. Doctor Garden's eyes recorded the fact as he came in. She smiled at him.

"Wait a minute. . . . You, Jim?" she inquired into the telephone. Then: "I can't go to-night; I forgot—it's Martha's first night at home." A pause. "No, I can't, possibly. I'm sorry. You'll go, please?" A pause. "Yes. Do! Good-by."

"Jim Carr?" inquired Doctor Garden; and then: "About the gardener, Evelyn——"

Martha rushed to the telephone the first half-

HER FLING

dozen times next day as she had in her old home. After that she let the maids answer; it seemed it was mother who was wanted. Mother apparently was doing everything any one had ever done, and a few new ones.

"A dancing class for working people! Of all things, mother!"

Mrs. Garden turned on her.

"Yes; of all things! To give pleasure to people who have none. Mad, isn't it?"

Martha was stupefied. "You used to give—to give them blankets."

"I do now—only I try to add some fun."

"Fun! For people who haven't proper food! But how can you handle—two hundred, is it? Why, you can't! I'd help you; but I'll have to save my strength. I'll be awfully gay now, likely."

"Oh—well," agreed Mrs. Garden briefly; and then: "I'd be glad to have you, Martha; but there are a lot to help. Jim Carr and the Grahams and Doctor French, and the Avery girls—about thirty. There's the telephone. . . . Yes, Miss Archibald—good morning! Oh, that's good of you! The seventh?"

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Why, I'd love it; but Mr. Garden is working every evening. Come without him? You don't want a lone woman at dinner—what? Oh—unprincipled blarney! Not every man in town, I'm afraid! Well, of course, I'll come. Dancing after? No; that won't keep me away."

And Martha underwent one more wrench. Poor Martha! Her steady-going, satisfied, cut-and-dried young mind was taken by an all-wise Providence—or something—and wrenched this way and that, until it worked only in jolts of painful astonishment.

Into the quiet university town Evelyn Garden had come, with no big daughter at her side to push her back a generation; she had come with such clothes as had not been seen in the place; the people in New York who made them had rejoiced in her uncommon type and revelled in an unlimited order, and sent her to Compton with a setting that brought out unknown facets in her looks.

She had come with money to spend, and eager to spend it for everybody's pleasure; she had bought lovely Cliveden, the largest place in town, and lived in it as everybody knew Cliveden should be lived in.

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And yet she was artless to the verge of pathos; quick to grasp an outstretched hand, and so appreciative of the mildest hospitality that the suspiciousness of a small town toward fine clothes and formal living was disarmed. It was she, now, who was popular. Doctor Garden, absorbed in his new work, had hardly been heard from.

"He's just charm by the pound," a girl said. "Mrs. Garden's subtle; she's gone through fire; her husband's raw material."

Martha staggered through the day as one wandering in a nightmare. She was not adjustable, she had small sense of humor; wherefore she found things not amusing. Her ponderous young firmness bumped through painful hours; by late afternoon her soul was black and blue. It simply could not be borne that in this family where she had reigned her mother should be the leader.

Something must be done! She could do nothing. Her silent scorn and her voluble remonstrance slipped alike off mother's gay good nature. The whole place seemed to be in league to spoil mother—everybody in town; even Jacky and Jimmy; even

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father. But father must have his eyes opened. She knocked at the study door.

"Come!" He looked up from a littered table.

"Ah, my girl, come in!"

"Father, I want to speak to you about mother—the way she's going on."

"Going on?"

"Yes, father. She'll be a laughing-stock; we all shall. At her age—beaux and dancing and gay clothes——"

"But, Martha——"

"Yes, father; you must attend to her. She won't listen to me, and it's—awful!"

"But, Martha——"

"Now, father, it's no good to say 'But, Martha!' Why, she's like any young girl! It's scandalous! And the men! And the clothes! They're all wrong."

"Are they?" Garden looked startled. "I thought she had rather pretty clothes. I remarked it."

"Pretty! They ought to be pretty! Everything comes from Ladenstein's."

"Oh!" agreed Garden. He had not heard of Ladenstein, but it seemed to be a vital point.

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"They're lovely clothes," Martha plodded on, "but not right for her. She always used to wear black and white—and mauve."

"Oh, mauve!" Garden tried to focus on that. Mauve was a color, he thought. He wondered what color. "She doesn't wear mauve now?"

"Oh, father! You don't see. She's dressing too young. She's acting too young. These men about her—it's bad taste. Father, you must speak to her."

Garden stirred restlessly. Of course he adored Martha; of course—his handsome big girl. But he never could talk to her, for some reason, more than five minutes without uneasiness. "Yes, yes, dear. We'll do that. We'll talk it over with mother."

"When, father?"

"Oh—I don't know." His hands were among his papers.

"After dinner?"

"Why, yes, dear; that will be very nice," he agreed absent-mindedly. And Martha, with one glance, left him.

There were no guests at dinner. Afterward Doctor Garden, radiant before the fire, with his cigar and

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coffee on his special little table, seemed removed from war and rumors of war. Not so Martha. She waited minutes for the opening gun; and then, as the gunner still purred blissfully, she fired a shot herself.

"Mother, I think father has something to say to you."

Evelyn Garden was standing over a great bunch of red roses, touching them on this side and that. She looked up quickly.

"Yes, John."

Garden stared at his daughter, astonished. What had he to—oh, yes! He remembered. He finished the coffee at a swallow, set down the cup, and looked at his wife approvingly.

"Evelyn, dear, how pretty you look! Evelyn, our little Martha has a grievance, and I promised to remonstrate with you." Evelyn stood tense by the flowers. "It seems that you—you don't wear mauve."

Nobody laughed. Martha saw nothing funny; father was being stupid—that was all. John Garden's eyes danced, but he wanted to get through; Evelyn

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felt the thunder in the air and waited. She turned to the girl.

"What do you mean, Martha?"

"Oh, mother, father and I think you are living so wrongly, throwing away your life on frivolities, acting in such an unfitting way for the mother of a family—for the mother of a grown-up daughter; so father and I——"

Evelyn interrupted.

"John, you and Martha have been talking me over?"

Then John Garden became impatient.

"Evelyn, you are the dummedest! What an idea! Martha came into my study with a tale about the color of your clothes—I was busy; so I told the child, yes, I'd speak to you. I think your clothes are very pretty; but Martha said it was wrong for you not to wear mauve. I remember that word distinctly—mauve. What color is mauve, Martha? That's a pretty frock you've got on, Evelyn! What's that color?"

"Oh, father!" Martha was nearly in tears. "You know it wasn't so much the clothes, though they're

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undignified for a lady of mother's age. It's all—the rest! My position in this house is unbearable." She began to cry in a half-hearted way.

"Martha!" spoke her father sharply. "What do you mean by that?"

Martha, her head on the end of the sofa, forced a small wail and did not answer.

"She means," spoke Evelyn Garden gravely, "that she can't bear to have me of importance in my own house."

Garden grinned suddenly.

"It wasn't so before—we came to this horrid Compton," said Martha. "She—she always used to sit up-stairs and sew laces on things—for me. And the parties were all—for me. And—and she wore dark dresses and—and didn't talk much; and—and I had the gay times, as a—as a girl ought. Now it's dif-different. Why, she has prettier clothes than I——"

"We spend the same money, Martha," put in Mrs. Garden.

"Oh, I don't care! She ought to see that mine are prettier; her taste is better—she's older!" the

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girl snapped. And then: "I came back expecting attention; and she has every man in town on her string. And Jim Carr—t-two people told me to-day he was in love with her!"

Martha had scored now. Mrs. Garden stood silent, as still as marble, by the roses—Jim Carr's roses.

"I—I can't live in such an unnatural way—my own mother taking all the b-brightness out of my life! I'm going to—going to marry Mr. Amory."

Garden swung about toward that not too graceful heap on the sofa.

"Marry Mr. Amory! You're mad, Martha! He's thirty years older than you."

"I—I don't care! He loves me very—very wonderfully." She was poking at her eyes with her handkerchief. The sensation she had made was doing her good. "And he's as rich as Croesus."

Evelyn turned to her husband; her hands went out in a gesture. John Garden's head was bent as though by weight; his eyes burned as he stared at his daughter.

"Do you love Mr. Amory, Martha?" Martha began to whimper again. "Do you?" he repeated.

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"Don't—don't be so hard, father," she complained. "Of course I love him—some. I shouldn't think of marrying him if—if I didn't love him, should I? But—" A full stop.

"But what, Martha?" John Garden's voice was quiet.

"But—I don't love him—quite so much— Oh, it's hard to say it! It's cruel of you to make me say it." Martha was enjoying herself immensely, tears and cruelty included.

"Say it, Martha."

"I don't love him so much as Mr. Letterblair."

"Letterblair?"

"Mr. Amory's secretary."

"Does he want to marry you, too?"

"Yes." Martha permitted herself a coy smile.

"And you love him?"

"Yes," whispered Martha, and glanced up to see the effect.

Evelyn Garden swept across the room; she knelt with her arms about her big daughter.

"Martha, my little girl, if you love him and he's worth it—marry him! Why should you think you

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have to sacrifice your heart? Why should you do such a horrible thing as to marry an old man for money?"

"Mother!" Martha drew away with offended dignity. "I wouldn't marry him for money. I love him—quite a little."

Martha got up gloomily.

"You can't understand, I think, mother. I shall have to decide alone, as you won't help me. Most girls have a mother's advice to lean on; but I'll have to act by myself. It's very lonely for me; but I hope at least you'll take time to help me with my trousseau," she added reproachfully. "That's likely to be important if I marry Mr. Amory."

She was gone. Evelyn sat on the sofa, her head in her hands, her body fallen into lax lines. Her husband stared at her.

"It must be my fault," she said at last. "Yet I tried. And I've failed. I've made some horrid mistake with her. It's my fault."

"It's not your fault." Garden spoke impatiently. "She's not got it in her—that's all. Some people are

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built so—limited. She's a good girl, I suppose. We both adore her, of course, and so——”

Evelyn flashed up at him.

“I don't adore her, John! It's hideous, but I don't. Of course I remember how she was my darling little baby, and how I adored her then; but——” A pause. “Ever since she was twelve she has patronized me and looked down on me; and now—now, when she sees I'm able to take a small place of my own, she resents it. She's—jealous of me!”

“I suppose you mean”—Garden's voice was dry and hard—“what she said about Carr.” A silence. “Is that true, Evelyn?” No answer. A longer silence; then: “Ah!” Another silence. “It is true. Are you in love with him also?”

Then something unexpected happened. Swiftly, like a flash of light, she flew to him; his head was in her arms; she was kissing the top of it, where the gray hairs were thick in the dark thatch.

“John! No! Nobody but you. Didn't you know it? You don't care much; you think I'm dull; you've lost interest! But I've never—I never will!”

By now she was on his knee, her arms were about

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his neck, and there was a haze and an upheaval and a glory round John Garden that seemed to stop the world. No more words then; but she hid her face on his stiff white collar and held tight to all of him possible. He tried to speak, and had to try again.

"Evelyn! Darling!" was what he said. His voice broke on that tender statement. "When Martha said that about Carr I felt I was done. Without you! Without your love! Why, you're the foundation of my life!"

She lifted her head. "I won't be foundation any more—just foundation."

"Well, then, you're all of it. You exquisite thing! You angel! You silly! Don't you know how wonderful I think you?"

"Then," said Evelyn Garden, "tell me so. Tell me every fifteen minutes."

John Garden did not smile.

"I think I might manage that," he considered.

Then Evelyn stood in front of him and talked.

"John," she said, "I knew you'd like me more if other people approved of me—yes, that's so! And I cared. I wanted your love, not your tolerance. That

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was all I'd had for years. I was a mummy. Of course, you merely did your duty by me. And then Jim Carr saw me one day when I happened to seem— young. And he liked me. And it astonished me, and made me think. I began to want pleasure, personal existence. He did that for me—waked me. And I'll always be thankful to him and care for him."

"You should," said John Garden.

"I knew you'd say it." She spoke gratefully. "And you can afford generosity, John, because it's not as I care for you. But I'd had long, deadening years, when often it seemed as though nothing was worth while. I wasn't of much importance to anybody—you, even. No, dear; I wasn't. What, John?"

The man had thrown out his arms on the table and his head fell on them. She bent over him, listening.

"Selfish brute? You're not! You just didn't see. But now I count—don't I, John? And I'm going to live harder and harder—not all frivolity, like these three months; that was just"—she laughed—"my fling. I'm going to live and do things—worth-while things. And you're going to think me worth while—

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aren't you, John? And tell me so—tell me that you love me? Every fifteen minutes?"

It was almost twenty-four hours later when Garden stood at the foot of his own staircase and looked up at the slender figure that descended to him leisurely from step to step. She wore a pink dress—the pink dress; not the aggressive pink of peppermint candy which Martha would have chosen, but a color that might be dissolved June roses, with a gold-brown October leaf melted in, and cobwebs crusted on it of silver and gold—a poem in clothes was what she wore. He caught her hand as she came smiling, and bent and kissed it.

"It's only fourteen minutes," he said; "but I can't wait—I love you!"



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BERMUDA, *March 11.*

I ONCE thought, when I was younger—at eleven or twelve years of age—that the objects of life were to read lots and have a noble character and such things, but at a later age (I now have numbered thirteen summers) I see more clearly. Ethel De-Koven lent me a splendid book Thursday, called “Love’s Great Reward,” which says how the clinging clasp of rose-leaf hands holds manhood’s power in leash, and also how the upward glance of asking eyes appeals from woman’s weakness to man’s strength, and is—I forget the words. But the idea is perfectly lovely. That seems to me a good plan, because it’s easier to give upward glances than it is to remember history and where the island of Formosa is, and also to be reliable and go to bed at nine by yourself. It’s a good deal of trouble, too, to play tennis really well, which Rose says I must. If you’re a nicer person by being ignorant and cling-

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ing, why not do that? "The eternal feminine," the book says—that's the greatest stunt you can do, and if you're naturally born a girl, how simple it is to be feminine! It was quite a revelation to me to get that idea, and it makes this sad old world so easy!

A person has to keep thoughts like this mostly to yourself, for the vulgar crowd doesn't understand. I told Rose a little about it because I was so interested, and she was horrid. Rose is my older sister (she has numbered twenty-two summers), and she's fair and beautiful as a lily; she's got a small head crowned with a wealth of red-gold hair, a slight, exquisitely graceful figure, large hazel eyes, and a voice of low music—she's perfectly corking for an eternal feminine, only she won't be it. She has the curse of intelligence, and how that rubs the charm from the flower of young womanhood, doesn't it? "Love's Great Reward" says so. Rose came into my room with a volume of Fiske's history of the American Revolution, and I knew she was going to do her half-hour, which she promised mother she would do every day, of solid reading. I'd stuck "Love's Great Reward" hurriedly under me and

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was sitting on it, because you can't tell how elderly sisters will take things, but I was chuck-full of its lessons, and my heart ached to see Rose's lithe young charms frittered on the Am. Rev., so I said, sternly:

"What's the good of stuffing yourself with that history? Leave intellectual prizes to the men—it's their province. Men don't like learned women. It's the clinging clasp of rose-leaf hands that holds manhood's power in leash."

You ought to have seen Rose whirl. She was fussing with the silver on my bureau quite placidly, but she whisked around like a typhoon—or tycoon, is it?—and stood with her mouth open, struck speechless. I wish she'd stayed so.

"Dorothea Vanderpool, what have you been reading?" demanded she outrageously overbearingly, and she didn't laugh. "I never heard such truck. Come—you might as well tell—somebody's been lending you novels again, and you know what mother will say to that. You come right into grand-mamma's room and repeat those sentiments to her. Get up—come on!"

I couldn't get up, because I was sitting on "Love's

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Great Reward," and I could plainly guess that Rose, in her prejudiced condition, would take it if she saw it. So I rocked.

"I don't care to see grandmamma just now," I said coldly.

Rose went on. "Last time you were going to be a Joan of Arc, and you crammed history and tactics," she said in a superior way which I hate. "This is a new line, and I know as well as if you told me that you've got hold of some fool book. 'Clinging clasp of rose-leaf hands'—you—you utter little donkey!"

That wasn't nice of Rose, yet I answered gently back. "But, Rose—it's so," I said. "It's that sort of women that calls forth the overpowering tenderness of strong, manly love—I'm sure of that."

Rose looked as if she wanted to hit me, and then she dropped into her chair and howled, which was rude. She's a disappointment to me. Of course I'm too young to be a heroine myself, but it would be lovely to have one in the family, and Rose would make such a splendid one if she'd act properly. Everything's just like a novel, only her behavior. Her being fair as a lily is such luck, and slim as a

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wand of willow just like Hermione in "Love's Great Reward"—and then having a wealth of red-gold hair is a rare gift. And the passionate lovers which she ought to have—she's got them. There's Major Westfield, and Jimmie Durand, of course—he's a chestnut—and several of the officers on the ships (of which Captain Paine of the *Thunderer* is the most glorious), and Captain Lee and Captain Cecil and many plain lieutenants. She has hunks of passionate lovers. Of course every self-respecting young lady has as many as convenient—but Rose has special hunks, because she's "ripping," as these English officers say. They give me brass buttons and ships' ribbons and take me into ward-rooms and gun-turrets, and I get lots of fun out of being her sister. They little know that I am reading all their inmost characters and sizing them up to influence Rose about them. But I am—all the time I am being still and ladylike I am just bursting with thoughts. I heard Lieutenant Wilson swear at a sailor who was doing his best, and I told Rose she mustn't let him love her, because real gentlemen are polite to servants who can't answer back. Also, I saw Captain

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Paine lick his finger to turn over a leaf, and I told Rose that at once, as I thought he'd been badly brought up, though kind. So it's important to behave before me. These soliloquizings are very interesting, but they slow down the story. Rose bullied me into grandmamma's room, and "Love's Great Reward" fell on the floor when I got up, and she pounced, and carried it off.

"See what this child's been reading!" she orated to grandmamma. "The most disgusting, trashy novel! How she can—a well-brought-up girl! Do talk to her, grandmamma."

Grandmamma was sitting by the window, reading, and her fluffy white hair looked like spun-sugar birds'-nests that they have around ice-cream. She gazed at me as solemn as an owl for half a minute, and then she grinned.

"You little sinner, Dotty!" she said. "You can't get along without romance by the pound, can you, dear?" Then she took the book from Rose and turned over a few pages. "*Oh! Oh!*" she said. "Really very bad. Where did you get it, dear?"

"Ethel DeKoven got it out of the library," I

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said. "*Her* mother lets *her* read anything she likes."

Grandmamma and Rose just looked at each other, and I knew they didn't approve, but Ethel DeKoven has numbered sixteen summers, and I think it's noble of her mother to trust her. But I didn't say anything—I knew better. Grandmamma thought a minute.

"I can't let you finish it, Dotty. I'm sorry. But I have an idea. Why don't you write a novel? Two years ago you were planning to lead a band of brigands, and then you thought the greatest thing on earth was to be strong and learn to shoot and ride; then last year you were anxious to be a professor in a college; and now you're having this attack of rabid sentiment. If you'd write a book yourself you could get those ideas in, and you wouldn't need to read lurid stuff like this."

Grandmamma doesn't go at you viciously as Rose does; she says the thing as if she just happened to be thinking of it, and so, even if you know she's wrong about "lurid stuff," you don't feel prodded. And that idea of writing a book seemed to me splen-

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did. I told her so. I liked it so much that I rushed to my room to begin, and didn't mind much when I saw Rose, from the window, making tracks to the DeKoven cottage with "Love's Great Reward" under her arm. I'd looked over to the end and knew how it came out, anyway—it was a perfectly lovely story.

Now I'm going to begin my novel. This isn't it, but I thought I'd write this to show how the novel happened to be written—it will be so interesting in my biography. I'll jot down things about it, carelessly, from day to day. I've decided this—Rose is the heroine. She's named Rosemarie, the daughter of an astronomer and a lady brigand; she's as gentle as she's beautiful, and she sees how wrong it is of her mother to be a brigand, and how unwomanly, and she has besought her mother many times to give up such a life and just be beautiful and beloved; but her mother won't. She says that the astronomer won't talk anything but stars and arithmetic, and it's such a sedentary life that she's got to get exercise and amusement somehow. So Rosemarie sees from her parents how sad it is to be learned or brig-

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andish, and she longs to be feminine and beloved, which she can't find in her own family—like me. Then in comes the hero! He's to be enormously large and strong and handsome, with piercing blue eyes which shine out mysteriously from a pallid olive countenance—like Major Westfield's. I think I'll have him a younger son, too. I don't see why that's a misfortune—I'm a younger daughter, and I don't mind. But Lady Ellenwood said to grandmamma the other day that Major Westfield was "a younger son, poor dear, and there was nothing ahead of him"—so it must be sad, and I want Rollo Leslie Livingstone to be sad. I think that's a nice name—Rollo Leslie Livingstone—Major Westfield's name is Leslie.

I think I won't tell the rest of my plot just now, because I want to tell about Rose. Anyway, the book will give the plot. Now, among all Rose's suitors there are two that shine forth in devotion—Major Westfield and Jimmie Durand. Jimmie Durand is the sort that even I call Jimmie—you have to. He's American, and came down here to see Rose, and the way he does it is to load grandmamma and me with

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indelicate attentions. They don't know I know he's awfully rich, because I'm not supposed to notice such things; but gracious! can't I see, if I am only thirteen, that a young chap with automobiles and dozens of horses, and a yacht which is coming to fetch him, must have a princely fortune? I think it's a great thing, too, but not so great as love, which is sweeter than honey in the honeycomb. Jimmie is young and fairly handsome, though a little pie-faced and squat-figured. But Major Westfield is a real hero. He's old—Lady Ellenwood said he was thirty-five, but that seems extreme—and he's got a very dark complexion and light blue eyes, and he's tall and broad and awfully, awfully strong—"the most powerful man in the regiment," Captain Lee said. He's kind to everybody and generally has time to talk to me seriously. I quite worried Rose and made grandmamma laugh yesterday by saying that I thought Major Westfield liked grandmamma most. Rose said:

"Of course he does—everybody does," but she looked bothered. After a while she came out. "He doesn't like me much, anyway."

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Which, considering we had been talking about Panama hats last, was a giveaway. I think it's a wise plan to pique Rose a little about grandmamma—it will make her value Major Westfield more highly, which is what she needs, with all these men spoiling her and her caring for none of them with a woman's all-absorbing love. My family are so careless and irresponsible that it's my duty to take care of Rose and settle her life's destiny.

March 16.—My! but I wrote a lot the other day. Since then much has transpired (that means happened). It was my birthday yesterday, and Major Westfield gave me a sailing-party in his new sailboat, the *Water Baby*, and I asked the people, and we had tea on Darrell's Island. I thought I'd seize the occasion to gather material for my novel, so I just asked elderlies—grandmamma and Rose, of course, and Jimmie Durand, because he'd have swum after us if I hadn't; then I had Captain Paine, who richly rewarded my kindness by saying that he'd give me a birthday lunch-party on board the *Thunderer* next week. I'm to sit opposite the captain at the other end of the table. Also, I had Captain

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Lee and Captain Cecil, because they're harmless and tame, Rose says; and an American admiral who was grandmamma's sweetheart long, long years ago, and who says she's the prettiest woman in Bermuda to-day. She is pretty, too. The admiral is seventy, and he dances.

I have decided at last that it is best for Rose to give her whole young heart to Major Westfield. I think he's poor and a younger son, which is very hard; and of course life with Jimmie would be one long carousal—but how noble to sacrifice all for him she loves! And Major Westfield has such eyes, and such a nice sailboat! Having come to this decision, I saw it was my duty to pique Rose into valuing his love. I got him to let me sail the boat, and he sat close by me at the rudder, teaching me, and I seized the occasion to drop into serious conversation—there wasn't much wind.

I said: "It's funny how much Rose likes anybody if she thinks they like grandmamma better. I don't see why, but she does."

Major Westfield looked at me under his eyelashes and said, "Really, now!" which is what he

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says when he doesn't mean a thing but intends you to talk.

So I went on: "If a man wanted Rose to like him much he'd just better stick tight to grandmamma and never notice Rose at all."

Major Westfield shot a look at me sort of sharply and suspiciously, but I just watched the sail, and I heard him murmur to himself, "Out of the mouth of babes"—and I didn't say another word.

He didn't look at Rose that whole afternoon—it was funny to see how surprised she was. He and the admiral capered about grandmamma and fought for who should bring her tea, and grandmamma's eyes sparkled, and she had the time of her young life. I believe that if ladies are framed like she is to attract the adoration of the stronger sex, they hardly ever are entirely cured. Of course grandmamma's rather intelligent, but you don't notice that when she's the centre of masculine attention, as she frequently is, and she's certainly, except for that, an eternal feminine. She's just as slim as Rose is, and so she can skirmish about ships and landscapes comfortably. And she says funny speeches

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and likes joking, which makes her plausible with the young and not a wet blanket like others of her ilk. She's sometimes quite amusing. And does she like being attentioned? "Rath-er," as Captain Paine says.

My plan worked like a charm. Major Westfield didn't give Rose a glance, but brooded over grand-mamma like a dove, and that got the admiral excited so he scrambled over the rocks boyishly, till I was afraid he'd break his old legs. Then the others—it's a curious thing. I've noticed that if two men are crazy about a lady all the others think there must be something in it, and stick about for fear they'll miss it. So Rose, the erstwhile belle, sat with her eyes getting more astonished every minute and saw her admirers circle around her grandmother. She's full of grand-filial devotion, but there's a limit. She was distinctly piqued, I'll say that. Grand-mamma was enchanted. When we got home that night she gave a fat sigh like a girl that's had such a good time she's nearly burst.

"Dear me!" sighed grandmamma, "I didn't think it was still in me to enjoy anything so much! The

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admiral was too delightful! What dear, nice boys those Englishmen are! And Major Westfield, my dear—Major Westfield is perfectly charming, Rose! *Charming!*”

Rose looked queer, and said with a snap: “Very—to you, but he was positively rude to me.” And then she walked out of the room. I knew the piquedness was working, so I was pleased.

March 18.—I’ve gotten to a difficult place in my novel. It’s where Rollo Leslie Livingstone asks Rosemarie to marry him, and I don’t know exactly what he ought to say. There was a scene like it in “Love’s Great Reward,” but the catastrophe came up differently, and, anyhow, I’ve forgotten. I’ve written this scene, but I’m not sure it’s lifelike. This is how it goes:

Rollo Leslie. “Most lovely of women, there is something I would ask—would pour from my heart to yours.”

Rosemarie. “You startle me. What can it be?”

Rollo Leslie. “Can you not imagine?”

Rosemarie (*thinks deeply for a moment and shakes her head*). “No, I can’t.”

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Rollo Leslie. "It is this: Will you connect your life with mine?"

Rosemarie. "Oh, yes—I have long wanted to do so."

And then they rise and shake hands. But I'm not sure that it sounds natural. I asked grandmamma if she remembered what she said and the gentlemen said when they proposed to her, and she said *yes*—she remembered. But she wouldn't tell. She looked embarrassed, which I thought rather kittenish. She ought to be frank at this era, and, besides, she knows how awfully important it is for my literature. So many times I'm disappointed in my family.

I wonder how this would do for the proposal scene? Marriage is a solemn vow, so why wouldn't it be an appropriate idea to have Rosemarie lift her yearning eyes to Rollo Leslie and answer reverently in a few chosen words of the church. Like this:

Rollo Leslie. "Flower of girlhood, will you bear the honored name of Livingstone?"

Rosemarie (lifting her yearning eyes). "Yes, verily, and by God's help so I will, and I heartily thank

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our Heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation."

I wonder will grandmamma and Rose jump on me for that? Probably they'll say it's profane, but I mean it quite respectfully. It would make things so simple if they would either of them tell me what is customary to be said. How can I know? And how can I write a great novel without knowing? I don't see why they're ashamed of it—it's a thing we all must face some time.

March 21.—Things aren't going well. I can't get the love-scene right. I read my two plans to grandmamma and Rose, and they just roared—or perhaps I should say squealed—anyhow, they were not polite. Rose made some suggestions, but they seemed to me very pusillanimous. So I haven't done any more to the novel. After their laughing I shall consider it honorable—or at least honorable enough—if I can listen and hear either Rose or grandmamma being made love to. I'll tell after, but I *have* to get some idea what Rollo Leslie must say to Rosemarie.

Also, my family's lives are progressing miserably. Maybe I got Rose too piqued, because now she

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treats Major Westfield horribly and plays with Jimmie all the time. I can't tell if her young heart is going out in one rushing flood to Major Westfield or to Jimmie. Major Westfield's the hero, of course—I have decided that forever—but yet Jimmie has great virtues. He brought me a five-pound box of candy, and that shows an affectionate disposition. Also, when I was let sit up for four dances at the hotel ball he asked me for two, and sat out the intermission as if I were a young lady, and said he'd teach me to drive his little car, and other pleasant things. He isn't so very squat-figured—Napoleon was not a tall man—and a warm heart is helpful. He's also funny and grotesque, which is a great charm, but yet is ready to laugh at the others. He always laughs at my jokes, and that shows a sense of humor. It would be jolly, too, to see Rose endowed with princely wealth, and probably they'd give me a car and a pony. Yes, it is wrong not to look on both sides of a question, and I'd hate to misjudge Jimmie.

I'm not sure but Rose thinks so, too, for she's gay and laughable to him, while as to Major West-

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field—my! she's so haughty with him I wonder he comes here. Only, of course, to see grandmamma—he talks to her all the time. But he looks at Rose, and he has that sad hound look in his eyes—I suppose it's a terrible blow to be a younger son, and makes life very bitter. Anyhow, I like to think of him having a deathless sorrow, and I don't see what else it is except that. I wish I knew if Rose loved him or Jimmie. I have *got* to get her settled. I ~~can't~~ write on my novel till I can overhear some love-making.

March 22.—Jimmie Durand asked me to go out in a rowboat. Later he asked me if we should invite Rose, too, and it was to be just as I said. So I said yes, and we three went. We dawdled down into Crow Lane, which is the name of the very end of the bay where it is narrow. The water was robin's-egg blue in the sunlight, and purple over the rocks, and creamy, opalish green in the shallows on the sand. I felt as if I could go around with bottles and get some of each color. There were sailboats careering about and people in them having fun, and the big *Bermudian* with her fat red smoke-stacks lay

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tied up at the wharf, and negroes were loading millions of boxes of onions and potatoes on her and calling and laughing and whistling, and lots of other rowboats passed as we drifted about—everything was gay. As we got out from shore we saw the town piled up, all white stone roofs and green trees, and the square tower of the cathedral standing guard high over it all, and the two thin towers and red arches of the court-house watched the cathedral in an absent-minded way, and the guns and barracks of the fort shot up in the distance. It's a pretty town; the dark green hills close around it all over, and here and there white roofs stick from them like silent little enchanted castles. It looks like an illustration to a story.

I listened to everything Jimmie Durand and Rose said, though they thought I wasn't paying attention, because I was leaning over with my sleeves rolled up and my arms in the water, getting shells, or else seeing the fish swim down in the bottom. But all the time I was listening. Once I heard him call her "dear." I snapped a look at Rose, but she just said:

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"Don't be an idiot, Jimmie. Look at that huge 'pudding' down there!"

By which I knew she knew I was listening, for there wasn't any pudding—a pudding's a big, fishy sort of thing that grows to the rocks under water. So I can't tell if she's just chummy with Jimmie, the way she acts, or if she feels bounding in her pulses a wealth of unspoken tenderness for him. But I've got to find out, because Rosemarie and Rollo Leslie Livingstone can't hang around forever waiting to get engaged. I am going to do something to make Rose show what's going on inside of her. Day after to-morrow is my lunch on board the *Thunderer*. I am going to do it then.

March 23.—How strange a sex are men! I confess that after all my studies I don't understand them. I mean especially Major Westfield. No one could have those olive features and that sad and princely bearing and not be framed for a hero, yet he seems not to want to be one. Last night was another of the dances, and I was let sit up through the fourth, and Major Westfield asked for the last one, and Captain Cecil and Captain Lee and Lieutenant Arm-

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strong had put down their scribbles for the others on a card that Rose gave me, so when Jimmie Durand asked for one I was engaged for all four! That was a delicious moment—I felt just like Rose. And he said: “Hello! We’re getting to be a belle, too, are we?” But that isn’t what I’m writing about. In the intermission after the dances we went out on the veranda just as the grown-ups do, and I started serious conversation with Major Westfield—I wanted to sound him.

I said: “Don’t you think it’s wonderful how the clinging clasp of rose-leaf hands holds manhood’s power in leash?” I thought that was about as stringent a way as I could begin (I’m not sure “stringent” is the word).

Well, he brought his chair around with a loud scrape and faced me as if I was a wildcat, and he said: “What the devil!” He did. I don’t believe he knew he said it, for he didn’t beg my pardon the way Jimmie does when he says “damn” unexpectedly. I repeated, and I must say I was surprised at his answer.

“What rot, my dear!” he said. “What bally

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rot!" and I'd thought, of all classes of people, a man would understand! So I put it to him more clearly.

"Don't you think," I asked him, "that the sort of a woman a man likes is the eternal feminine? Don't you think that a woman is more beloved and calls out the overpowering tenderness of strong, manly love more—more hard—if she doesn't try to be intelligent and leaves intellectual contests to such as are masculine? Don't you believe that the upward glance of asking eyes appeals from woman's weakness to man's strength? Don't you, Major Westfield?" I thought that was plain enough, but all he did for two or three minutes was to stare and shake his head, and then he brought out—as if he was talking to himself, you know:

"Well, if this isn't rum!" and then in another minute: "A child of thirteen—quaint—devilish quaint! What have they been letting the infant read?"

That was disappointing to me, when I was looking forward to conversation about life's mysteries, so I wriggled. Then he brought his eyebrows down

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in a big frown as if he was angry, but his eyes were a little smiling—I couldn't tell how he was feeling by that look. And he began and talked a lot for him—he usually talks rather sparsely. I've thought back hard, and remember most that he said, and this is it.

"You're a rummy baby," he began—which offended me a little. "But I'm fond of you, and it's jolly sad to see you make a fool of yourself, don't you know. Now, listen—you mind your books and don't be afraid of knowing too much, for that's not likely in a girl, or a boy, either. As for the kind of women a man likes, what's that to you? Let men look out for hitting off the kind a woman likes. Don't you bother. Personally, I detest a pretty fool, and if my——"

He stopped then and gave a sort of a sniff and a cough as if to collect himself.

"If my wife knows more than I do, and I hope I'm lucky enough to get one that does" (maybe he thought I didn't know he meant Rose), "well—I'll respect her so much the more, don't you know.

"Men talk a lot of rot, but they like the women,

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the right ones, to be queens. A man likes deuced well to fetch and carry for the right woman. He's a big brute and will bully whomever's afraid of him, but he's a bit like a horse, and loves the rider who can handle him. This is certain, the prettier you are, and the cleverer, the thicker they'll drop. An advantage is an advantage, and knowing a bit is an advantage like the rest, don't you know. But, by Jove! that's not the point. In spite of Bernard Shaw, man's the pursuer. Woman sets the pace—she's civilization, if she knew it—it's for her, and without her we'd revert to cave-dwelling. However, it's all one—we're humanity between us, and it's as if your left eye came it over your right—there's no real rivalry possible. We have to sink or swim together, and the big-minded ones, men or women, don't heave bricks at each other. Rum thing how a woman will throw away her pull, though!" he said, and then grinned again at me. "I'm talking above your head a bit, Dotty."

He said that in a cheerfuler tone.

"Here's the idea, chuck the sentiment. It'll do you no good at your age, and that sort is rot. Stick

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to your book and mind your lessons, and get all the sense and learning you can into that pretty head, and you'll have none too much. But, maybe some fine day you'll be half as good-looking and clever as your sister, and you'll do well if you pull it off at that."

The music began for the fifth dance and he marched me in to grandmamma.

"Mrs. Vanderpool," he announced, "I'll hand over a young earthquake. She's given me a shake-up. I'd recommend a doll and a tennis-racket and a few arithmetic lessons, and no novels—yet I'm no judge. I've got this next engaged. Good night, Dotty. Remember my advice."

Which left me feeling undignified. I'm disappointed about Major Westfield, yet he's a *little* undermined my confidence in "Love's Great Reward." But there's my own novel to be done, and he's the hero. If there was anybody around as heroic as he is, I'd change, because I'm indignant at him now. Yet I like him, except when he talks essays, and he's all started for a hero, and I have hopes of overhearing him make love soon, and then

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I can get my scene done and feel independent. I wonder if he knows more about life than "Love's Great Reward" does? I wish I could catch him being loverish—I'll bet he doesn't talk essays then. I wish I knew which Rose liked best. The lunch on the *Thunderer* is to-morrow. I'll do something then. I have a plan.

March 25.—I did it. It's all settled. I know which. And I've already written the love-scene, almost the very way they said it. I improved it a little. I'd never have thought of doing it that way, but I know it's right because it gave me cold shivers down my spine. This is how it happened.

The *Thunderer's* "judy-boat"—which is what the officers call it, but they mean "duty-boat," only the English never learn to speak properly—the judy-boat came to the Princess steps at noon to take us off to the ship. The two Miss Scudders and Major Westfield and Jimmie Durand went, besides grandmamma and the admiral and Rose and me. It was a delicious day, and the judy-boat just flew. It fairly ate up islands and blue water, and soon we had passed Agar's, where the ammunition is, and

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Admiralty House, and a lot of places I knew, and were off Ireland Island, right by the hideous big red floating dock. Out in the wide water of Grassy Bay lay all the ships, six of them, like dark-gray bulldogs sitting quiet and peaceful for their masters but ready to bite in a minute. Two of them were signalling, and it was funny to see the bright-colored flags flying up and down in bunches, and to know it meant words. And, just as we got near, the English admiral went on board the *King Alfred*, one of the four-funnelled ones, and they fired a salute of a lot of guns, and I made believe to myself that it was the *Guerrière*, and I was commanding the *Constitution* against the dastardly British. I got so excited that I jumped up and said aloud: "Now, boys, pour it into 'em!" like Captain Isaac Hull, and Jimmie Durand laughed till he got purple. Rose laughed, too, but when Major Westfield said, "Bravo for the patriot!" she looked coldly at him. I thought at that junction that she didn't like him, but I know now that a bursting heart oft covers itself with icicles. The lunch was lovely. I sat opposite Captain Paine at the end of the table, and felt happy but a little scared—it was queer to have

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all those big men in white uniforms and brass buttons drinking my health. But I liked it. I find as I go on living that one often likes things that embarrass one out of one's eyes. Then after lunch we went over the ship and saw the great hydropathic gun—that's the wrong word, but it's enough like that. And we went down greasy ladders into dark places and saw the torpedoes. My! they're enormous—I thought they'd be the kind I used to throw on the Fourth of July, so I was surprised. They're ten or fifteen feet long—of course, it's necessary if you're going to blow up a ship. Then we went back on deck, and I knew it was time for my plan. I saw Major Westfield and Jimmie Durand go off with Captain Paine, and as I'd heard them talking I knew they'd gone to see about some question of the torpedoes, and I seized that crucial moment. Grandmamma and Rose were in the captain's cabin with divers lieutenants and men-things of that sort, and I burst into the door and waved my hands and shouted:

"Oh, Rose! Oh, grandmamma! Oh, Mr. Reynolds! Oh, Mr. Fletcher! Oh, Rose! Oh—*Rose!*"

Of course, they were all crowding around me by

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then, and I wailed and wailed, calling their names over like a roll in school, till Rose caught my shoulders and gave me a shake, and said:

“What is it? Dotty, what is it? Tell me instantly!”

And then I wailed out: “Oh, Jimmie Durand’s fallen overboard, and there’s a shark after him!”

I wailed it distinctly, so they all could hear. The men started for the deck, and Rose gave a great jump and said: “Jimmie!” weakly. I had my eyes glued on her.

Then I wailed out quickly: “There’s more—more!” They stopped and stared at me, and I instantly went on: “Major Westfield’s jumped in after him, and the shark has bit—” but there wasn’t anybody there—they’d bolted for the deck.

Except Rose. She got hold of a table, and stood staring at me, perfectly white, and trying to breathe and not doing it. I didn’t like the way Rose looked. But before I could speak again she had melted past me through the doorway, and I turned and followed her. There was a grand hullabaloo out there, and Lieutenant Armstrong was giving orders like thun-

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der, and sailors were skedaddling about like mad, and in a minute a boat was shooting down to the water. I must say they were quick—I was delighted to have a chance to see how sailors could hurry in a critical epoch. Yet I have my doubts if a lively shark couldn't have hurried his lunch quicker. Anyhow, just in the middle of the excitement Captain Paine came around the corner, looking astonished, and right behind him strolled Jimmie Durand and Major Westfield, chipper as jaybirds.

Then I knew which, for Rose never saw Jimmie at all. She shot past the others and caught Major Westfield's arm with both hands and gasped at him as if he was the most remarkable sight on earth—and he was, considering she thought a shark was eating him that minute. And then she sobbed. Just sobbed openly. Of course, Major Westfield was surprised—who wouldn't be?

I think I won't recount what Rose said to me, or what grandmamma said to me shortly after, when I owned up I'd done it for a joke. They were rather unladylike, and I told them frankly that they'd no sense of humor. Neither had Captain Paine. He

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didn't say much, but what he did say threw a new light on his character. They all seemed to feel uneasy when things quieted down, and the gayety was strained, but we couldn't go home, because the judy-boat was off and wouldn't be back for three-quarters of an hour. So Captain Paine and the officers began to entertain us feverishly and marched us in a squad to see this and that, and "splits"—which is whiskey and soda, I learned—met the men at every corner. They didn't treat me with the distinguished attention which I had called forth before lunch. They let me alone. But I was interested, because I could see that Rose and Major Westfield were agitated; so I hung about meekly and watched my hero and my bella donna, and patience was rewarded.

Captain Paine, with one eye cocked for the judy-boat, hurried the party out of his cabin to see something of guns. Rose was the last, and I saw Major Westfield speak to her, and she dropped back, and he went out and circled around the deck and came in by another door. I was outside and I saw it. The party went on, and a sailor came along, and I nodded

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up to the port-hole, and said to him: "Boost me." He looked astonished, but I put up my foot and he put out his hand, and he boosted. I peeped in through the port-hole. There they were, right below me, alone in the captain's cabin. He was holding both her hands like grim death—I almost squealed out loud for joy. I kicked about softly to find a foothold, and the sailor put my foot on something that stuck out high up the wall, and I was all right; so I drew back my face and grinned at him, and he went away. I had made up my mind to listen, you know, so it wasn't dishonorable. And, anyhow, what I heard and saw shall be forever sacred. This is it:

Major Westfield. "But you cared, dear." (I'd missed some, it was quite evident.)

Rose. "I—I made a horrible idiot of myself." (Then he kissed her hands, one after the other, lingeringly. I never thought of that—it was lovely. Rose went on.) "Before all those people!"

Major Westfield. "What do you care for the bally people!" (Huh! Grandmamma is a bally person, is she? and *me*!) "You cared if I was in danger—tell me you cared."

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Rose. "I won't tell you." (You'd think he might have guessed that much.) "But I'll tell you this—I'll never respect you again if you like me after I made such a fool of myself." (Then they both began to chuckle, which I was afraid might interrupt the loving—but it didn't.)

Major Westfield (still chuckling). "I have Dotty to thank for everything. If the devil hadn't prompted her to mischief, I might never have known."

Rose. "I could kill that child."

Major Westfield. "She ought to be spanked, of course" (I ought, ought I? *Me!*), "but I am grateful to her. I thought you liked Durand. I had about given up hope."

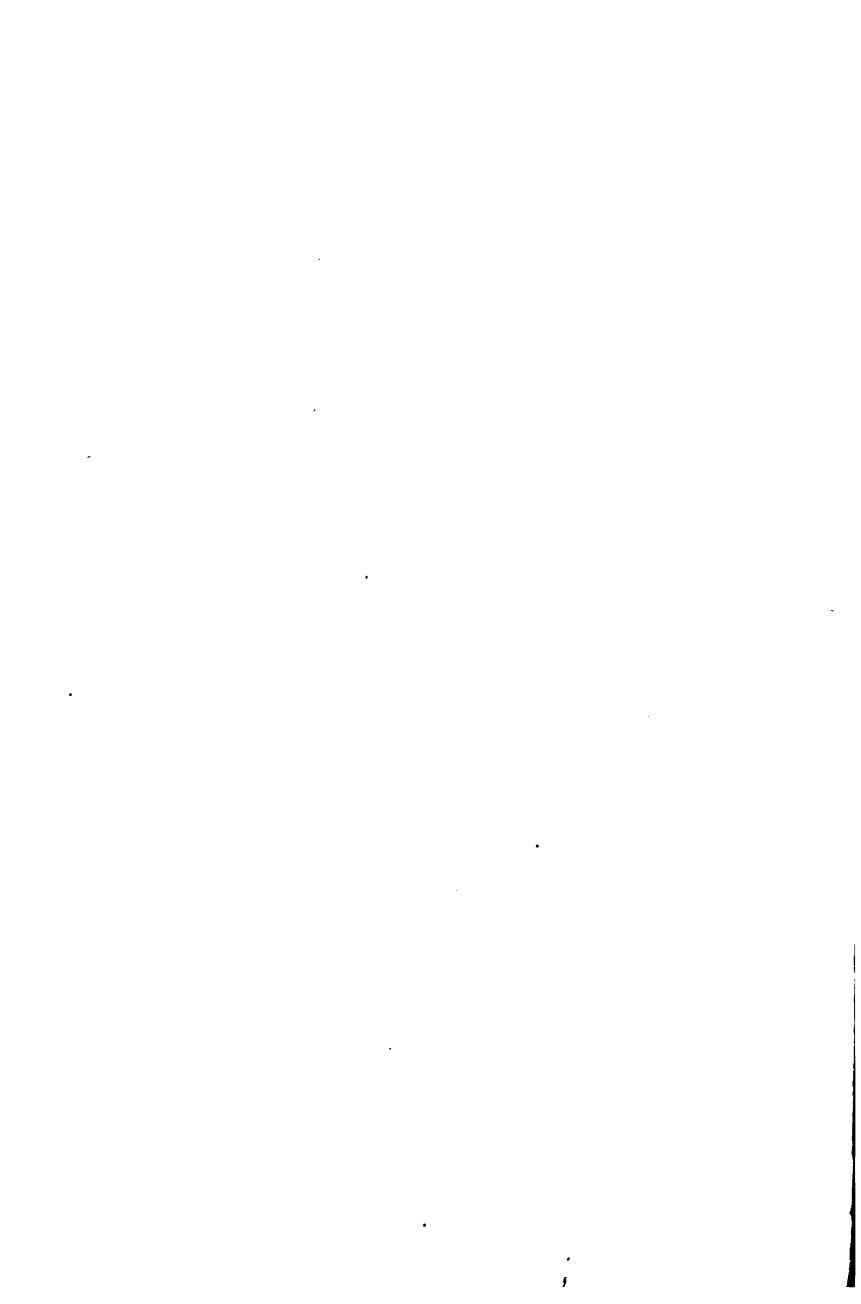
Rose. "Cherub-faced Jimmie! Nobody takes him seriously. He's a dear cub, that's all. But I thought you liked my grandmother!" (Then they both gurgled again. I thought loving was more tragic.)

Major Westfield. "You dear goose! That imp of a Dotty! An *enfant terrible* with a vengeance. But she's of small importance, and there's something very important you haven't told me yet."

Rose (playing up innocent. I know her). "What?"



There they were, right below me.



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Major Westfield. "That you care for me—that you will care for me—enough." (Then he held her hands against his coat lapels in a beautiful manner, and stared anxiously at her front hair—she had ducked her head modestly. He continued on.) "Tell me, dear." (It made cold shivers run over me when he said "dear.")

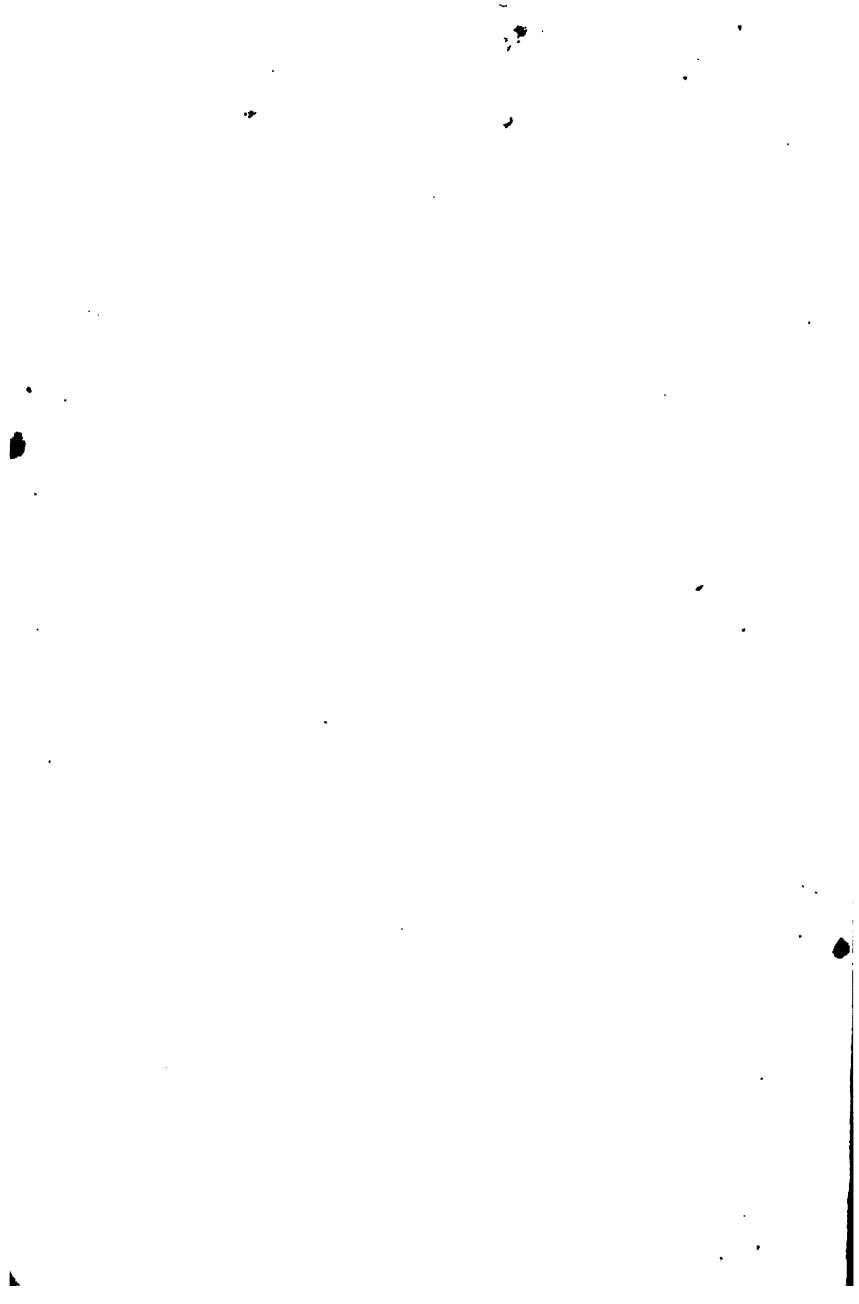
Rose (whisperingly). "I do—care."

Then I tell you there was something doing. They didn't stand up and shake hands like my idea—no, indeedy! I soon saw that wasn't sporting enough, as Jimmie says. Major Westfield's arms got around her awfully suddenly, and her head was down in his coat, and he bent over and gave her such a slow yet violent kiss as I'd never dreamed of. I should think it would have hurt, but Rose was furious when I asked. And continuous—my! it lasted one and three-quarters minutes (I looked at the captain's clock), and I don't know how much longer it might have lasted if something hadn't unfortunately occurred. I suddenly felt my leg pulled from outside, and simultaneously I sneezed—from the startle, maybe—and off went my hat right on Major Westfield's

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head. You ought to have seen those two jump! Well, everything stopped, and in a second in came Jimmie Durand and all the others, full of curiosity about why I was hanging into the port-hole. Rose was in a fit for fear I'd tell, but I just said I was looking at something interesting, and Rose got scarlet, and Major Westfield half laughed and half looked raging, and they couldn't do anything to me. Of course, it was important to me because of my novel. I've got the scene written, but I've half a mind to do the story over. Major Westfield has talked to me again, and I see now that it's better to be as intelligent as you can, which isn't much. Oh—he and Rose are engaged, and I don't mind about Jimmie's cars, because Leslie—I call him that now—is going to have a pack of hounds in England, and I can ride with them. He's a younger son, but he says it isn't so bad when you've got an uncle. Brains are great things, Leslie says. Yet it's beautiful to think how the clinging clasp of rose-leaf hands holds manhood's power in leash, and I'm not sure but I'll be sorry when I grow up if I'm too clever to be an eternal feminine. That's quite dangerous.

COALS OF FIRE



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IN the middle of a sentence the speaker stopped short. It was as if the crowded auditorium held its breath. In the tense stillness one heard sounds of the city outside; above all, one heard newsboys calling extras, every moment that wailing cry of high young voices:

“Extra! Extra! All about——”

The words trailed off into tones only. But everybody in the hall knew what it was “all about.” Everybody knew that this sudden sea of extra editions shouted in the streets of London meant a battle of the new war. Somewhere, by land or sea, men, Englishmen likely, were dead and dying at that second. A childish voice ringing distantly through the stillness was a sound to strike terror. The speaker held up her hand.

“You hear!” she said, and the intimate inflection of the two words said more. It said: “That is the

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thought claiming us. How can I make a speech on politics when every brain here is racing after the vague cries out there!"

Then she put the thought into words. She was a little girl, not over twenty-five, delicately built and fair, with a gentle voice, yet a voice which people listened for, and heard.

"You hear the boys calling extras?" she asked. "You can't help listening. I can't, any more. Less, perhaps, for as I came here to-night the children in the street selling the evening papers put an idea into my mind which hasn't got shaken out. I haven't had time to think about it, to see if it is sane or quite mad. May I tell it to you, this scheme which grew like a mushroom, like a flame, in my brain as I came to talk to you?"

There was no question that they wished to hear the scheme. When the clapping had died down the girl, flushed a bit at her evident power, winning of manner, responsive to the friendliness which she always drew forth, faced them silently a moment. Her blue eyes shone down into the crowd with a keener light. She tossed up a hand sharply and the

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thrill which had caught her went through the audience.

"I must believe in it," she cried. "It has come to me from beyond myself. It has come to me," she said clearly, "that in this national crisis the women of England who believe themselves worthy of equal responsibilities with men have an opportunity. Suppose all the woman's suffrage organizations of the country should lay aside their cause for the duration of the war; that all who can volunteer for service in the field should at once go into training; that the treasuries should be turned over to the work; that we should, as an organized body, for the men of England who are refusing us our hearts' desire, pour out our strength, our money, and our lives—" She stopped, her look flashing, considering. Then—"I think that's all," she finished.

There was a gasping moment when no one of the six thousand people seemed to blink as all the twelve thousand eyes stared. With that a voice somewhere repeated "That's all!" and at once the great place broke into a ripple, a wave, a sea of laughter. The girl on the platform, in a flash a mere girl and not a

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speechmaking agitator, laughed with them till the merriment died. And into its last echoes she spoke.

"I'm Irish, you know," she spoke. "It's quite natural for me to make a bull." Her face was swiftly intense. "There's a kind of laugh which kills a question," she said. "This isn't that kind. This means, not that the question is absurd, but that my making little of it, as I seemed to do, was absurd. Wasn't that it?"

And left-over laughter all through the house answered her friendly. With that she was again the flaming bit of humanity which had proved itself many times a valuable asset. "I think the question is not absurd," she went on. "I think it's serious. I've heard it in words now, and I believe—I believe—" She hesitated; her hesitations were among the most telling points of her speeches, for they enlisted an audience on the side of the small thing struggling to get to its good-will. "I believe"—she flew at her sentence—"that it would be the grandest heap of coals of fire that anybody ever did heap on the heads of a lot of stubborn gentlemen. We

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mustn't lose our identity; we must go as suffragists, united and whole-hearted, and show what we will do for our men, for our men who won't do the thing we ask for us. Coals of fire!" she repeated. "We'll scorch them into reason; we'll burn our way to their brains with our suffering and our courage. Coals of fire—coals of fire!" The mystical blue eyes flamed, as if deep in them burned already glorious coals.

The audience was caught off its feet; the Celtic dash of the girl made her words inflammable; every creature there was already tinder, easy to light with the scratch of a match which had to do with the war. She stampeded the house; with a roar it rose to its feet, men and women; they shouted and waved and pounded, till at last she held up her hand.

"Give me a chance," she threw into the tumult, and laughed. "It's a grand idea—it is. Isn't it?" She nodded confidently at the ocean of faces down in front. "I know it, is if I did do it myself. But give me a chance. I want to make a motion." And the house was suddenly still. She stood there silent

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a second, thoughtful. She had been making speeches for two years now, and audiences had been kind to her. She was not afraid of them, or conscious with them. This one watched, silent, as a person might watch an attractive child, for a long half-minute. She lifted her eyes in a blue flash. "Doesn't anybody want to be saying anything?"

From a back seat a woman shot up, a fresh-colored, strong woman with a hawk face. "Yes. I do," she said. "I'm a trained nurse. I went through the South African war. I'm at the head of a nursing home now. I'll go. I'll take classes to train."

Across the aisle another woman rose, a woman in smart clothes and jewels. "I can't give as much as—my sister." She smiled at the nurse in her plain dark clothes, the "sister" whom she had never before seen. "I can't give myself. I can't go. I'm too old, and I'm ill. But I'll start a subscription for the training. I'll subscribe five thousand pounds." She turned again to the nurse. "It's far less than your gift," she said, and sat down.

With that a gray-haired woman, beautiful once, with a face still chiselled and proud and a look

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which was like ice over a volcano, was standing; some one else sprang up in front; another and another; there were five trying to speak. The chairman of the meeting looked at the woman with the cold face, standing in her lilac dress, dainty, feminine. "Mrs. Illingworth," she said; the last time the chairman had seen Mrs. Illingworth she had been in prison.

She began to talk; the incisive, tired tones carried everywhere. "This is not a thing to hurry. We have toiled and undergone for what we have got—" And with that there was a murmur about her, a beginning of applause, for many knew her and what Ellen Illingworth had herself undergone. But she hushed the murmur. "I want to say something," she spoke. "We have a large organization; we have work doing; we have money; we have given years and strength to get these things. We should be quite sure of what we wish before we expend everything for a cause not—our own." She sat down; a chill seemed to fall upon the excited audience. But at once a young woman was on her feet, a rosy-cheeked young Englishwoman.

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"Not our own!" she cried. "England! Aren't we all English before we're anything else?"

"No. I'm a woman first," the tired voice answered quietly, and again a chill came upon the house. Slowly Mrs. Illingworth stood up once more. "I'm older than most of you," she spoke. "I have seen and I have—suffered." The audience, turned this way and that to face toward her, listened. Every one knew who she was now, every one knew her record, for the press had thundered at this small, gray-haired lady who stood there in her gay, lilac, feminine frock, with old lace at her haggard throat. People were likely to listen to Ellen Illingworth, out of curiosity if for no other reason. The measured voice went on. "Consider if we should do as Miss O'Hara suggests. The edifice which we suffragists have built through patient years would be gone in a year; many young lives would be gone; our sinews of war would be gone; we should come back to the weary battle, at the beginning, worn out. As for the men—" The lined, proud face smiled a sarcastic smile. "I have learned things about men. There is here and there a ~~man~~ who may be trusted not to abuse power; men—never! There

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would be no gratitude; no question of fair play toward mere women; no thought that we had won consideration in serious questions. You talk of coals of fire!" The woman's shaking fist was raised in air and her face was torn with bitter feeling. "It might be so toward other men, toward savages, toward dogs—not toward women. Women—their age-long slaves and dolls—what should they ask better than sacrifice? Haven't women always taken the pain without the gain? Why should that time-honored formula change? I tell you that if the suffragists of England adopt this mad scheme, and if English armies come home victorious, it will be the old story. For the men, honor, glory, fame; for the women, suffering, sacrifice, silence. Coals of fire! Our Englishmen would brush them irritably off their thick skulls and order us back to the dish-washing, as they have done and will do till we force them by the only reasoning they can understand—by violence and destruction and, perhaps, bloodshed—to give us what we will have." Trembling, Ellen Illingworth sat down and, bowed together, hid her face in her hands.

The house was breathlessly still for one moment.

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Then an unrest, a murmur, from this side and that, arose. The Irish girl, the speaker of the evening, stepped forward to the edge of the platform, her hand up in an eager gesture. But before the uneasy audience had come to her whip, before she had spoken, something happened. From the row of notables at the back of the platform a figure detached itself, a very old, bent, tall woman, bright-faced, serene, leaning on a cane. As she took the first quick, birdlike step forward, feeling the way with her cane, every one in the hall saw that the brilliant black eyes were blind. A man moved to her, but she pushed him away, smiling. She would go alone. Aileen O'Hara, facing the house, was conscious of a stir; she turned, sprang back to the side of the blind woman, and together they came forward, helpless old age, glowing youth. The audience waited with a shock of interest in this new drama of a dramatic evening, and then the little young girl, on tiptoe, whispered a word, and the tall woman, bent as she was, bent more to catch it.

"Why, yes, my dear," people heard her answer.

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"Ladies and gentlemen," Aileen O'Hara said clearly, "I'm not feeling any necessity to introduce the next speaker, beyond telling you that this lady is Evelyn Erskine."

Perhaps only a few persons in Great Britain could have been found who did not know the name of the oldest woman-suffragist in the kingdom, the friend in her girlhood of John Stuart Mill, a power yet, in age and blindness, in the councils of the movement. She stood, very old, bowed, sightless, with her sunny, gentle face turned vaguely, smilingly toward the great, full auditorium, while they greeted her, clapping, cheering, calling her name. And when they stopped a tremulous voice came quite suddenly into the stillness.

"Friends," she spoke, "since women have lived on earth, the banner over them has been Love."

The quavering voice halted, and in one long peal the auditorium broke into applause, but stopped suddenly as the smiling, blind face turned toward the girl, and the lips spoke a word and the girl held up her hand.

"Wait," Miss O'Hara said, "till she has fin-

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ished; you must not take her strength." And the house was still as death.

The old voice went on. "Love. That is still the word on the banner. Not less because we are constrained to-day to write two or three other words beside it. We must write them. Freedom is the greatest one. Opportunity, vision, light"—the eyes which had no vision or light smiled out over the house—"those come out of freedom. We have had to do hard things in freedom's name; it is so always. Yet we want it because the love which we must give will be in that way more worth while, wiser, stronger." She labored a bit with the speaking, but she went on bravely. "Then why, when love is the greatest of our watchwords, should we do our work with bitterness? Men and women are the two halves of humanity. Divided we fall. That is why some day men must give us what we must have. That is why when women fight for freedom, to death, if need be, it should be without malice, with kindness. If there is any bitterness leave it to those who oppose us. But if we keep our own hearts kind there will be, after a while, not any bitterness. Do not

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let us lose courage if we fail again and again. Do not let us lose faith if men fail us again and again. The day will come—I think it is coming fast—when courage and faith will sweep down the barriers as the waters cover the sea. This child”—her hand went out to Aileen O’Hara’s responsive one—“has shown a way—I never dreamed of so big and beautiful a way—to act as the angels might act, to spend all for love, never counting the cost. Is there any doubt that we should take this heaven-sent opportunity? I think none. Englishwomen will show themselves in England’s trial great enough to drop all questions, however large, of their own gain and throw heart and soul into England’s safety. With our wide organization we can do much. It is our dear men who are going to bleed and die out there; it is our men, dear even as opponents, who have denied us what we must some day have. It is on those beloved thick skulls, as Mrs. Illingworth says truly, that we should heap our coals of fire. Let us do that. Let us, as swiftly as possible, put our strength at the government’s disposal and work now, not for womanhood, but humanity.” A tremu-

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lous arm stretched toward the upturned sea of stirred faces, and the smile on the wrinkled face was a benediction. "I say to you, as a very old saint once said—from the height of my years I say to you all: 'Little children, love one another.' "

When Aileen O'Hara had led her back to her seat and had come forward again, and when the tumult of applause was still, the Irish girl, her blue eyes blurred as if tears were close, spoke a sentence. "I was forgetting to tell you beforehand," she said, "that the suffragists have taken on a very small number of angels out of heaven to back them up. The last speaker is one." And men and women in the house wiped away tears as they laughed.

She turned to the chairman. "I move," she said, "that the woman's suffrage societies of Great Britain and Ireland be advised by this meeting to change and adjust their organizations so as to form a relief corps for service in the care of the wounded during the war now beginning; that they apply the money in the treasuries to that object; that subscription lists be opened for further funds; that training classes for service at the front be formed."

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She stopped. The chairman, looking at her, repeated the motion to the house. A man in the body of the hall, with a short speech of approval of the scheme as essentially in woman's domain, a speech which showed him an anti-suffragist, seconded the motion, and it was carried at once almost unanimously. There were questions, suggestions, a subscription list of many signatures, and at the end of everything little Aileen O'Hara, who had turned her evening's address to such revolutionary purpose, came once more to the edge of the platform.

"Dear people," she said, in the confident tone which came rightly from her, "I want to thank you for this meeting. Also for not thinking me mad—only inspired. For it's inspired the idea was—it's none of mine. From beyond somewhere it lighted, and it used my lips only because they came convenient. Before I stop talking I've a few words to repeat that were written by a man for men. You all know them. I'm using them now because to me they have seemed always to be written for the express comfort and help of us. I hope they will go home with all of us, for it's we that can use them if we will."

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The very blue eyes flashed this way and that till she seemed to have gathered up the crowded place in the palm of her hand, and then, her fair head thrown back, her gaze out beyond, in the cruel places, perhaps, to which she was leading her host of following women, she began to repeat Kipling's "If":

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you."

Line after line slid out, each with its distinct touch of alluring brogue. She came to the second half of the second stanza:

"If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken,"
repeated little Aileen O'Hara very slowly—

"Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop, and build 'em up with worn-out tools—"

And then:

"If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to you: 'Hold on'—"

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She stopped. "It's that has got to be done. We've got to learn, we women who are going into this war, to do exactly that thing—to hold on when there's nothing in us at all, at all, except that dogged thing that doesn't stop saying 'Hold on.' Doesn't stop it till we die of it, sometimes. You who are enlisting for this work, do you know we'll have to drop in our tracks, many of us, and just plain die? We're to face that. It comes to me to say one other thing and then I'll stop talking. It's this: If this goes, the spirit in which the suffragists carry it through is going to mean more to suffrage than fifty years of agitation. We've got to be not only as brave, as self-forgetting, as devoted as other nurses; we've got to be more so, because we're labelled as unwomanly, and this is our chance to prove that hearts and heads are no enemies. Every woman going into this crusade should vow herself to it like a knight of old; she should make up her mind that no fatigue, no danger shall weigh against service; that every service is to count as a joy, and that the hardest and most repulsive duty must be so flooded with that word on Mrs. Erskine's banner

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that every suffering man shall be our brother and we shall love them all."

In the street, as she came out of the hall, stood a tall man whose carriage instantly affected one with a sense of incongruity that he was not in uniform.

"Aileen!" He stepped forward.

Lady Whitcomb, she who had subscribed five thousand pounds, who was going to drive the girl home, swept on to her car.

"Walk," he begged. "I'm ordered off to-morrow. It's my last chance."

And Lady Whitcomb nodded to the girl's half-dozen words and understood. The girl was excited.

"I've been at it again, as you say," she threw at the man as they swung down the dim street. "Why don't you scold? Why don't you tell me I'm unfeminine, and men dislike strong-minded females?" A loose lock of her hair blew against his shoulder as she smiled up at him, so close, on the narrow walk, that his pulse quickened.

He answered gloomily: "You know how I hate you to do it."

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"Were you in there?" inquired Aileen.

"No. I've never heard you speak. I couldn't stand it."

"The audience stood it well, I'd have you know. If you please, Captain MacLeod, I had applause to-night and the audience did exactly as I wished. They did that." She nodded her head exultantly. "There was a big idea which came to me from"—she waved her hand cheerfully toward the stars—"from somewhere. I don't know where. Witches, angels—something beyond me put it into my head. And it went, Duncan, it went like wildfire. They're going to do it. And it's a big scheme——"

The man interrupted. "Aileen, you don't know what you're doing. You're using your charm and your—your brains to light fires that you can't put out. Here's the country in the grip of a war, with her hands full of danger to the limit and you're seizing this time for a mad scheme to make more trouble."

The girl watched him as he talked, admiring, amused, buoyant. "It's that, is it?" she said. "And is there a war? Oh! Well, maybe you'll know better some day what I've done to-night."

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The man turned suddenly under a dark arcade and caught her in his arms. "Never mind what you've done to-night," he said. "My regiment's off to-morrow; there's no telling— Will you do this? Will you say that if I come back you'll marry me and give up this suffrage nonsense? What will you want of a vote when you're my dear wife? I'll never let rough things come near you—I'll guard you like a queen. Our home shall be your kingdom. You will have such love, such honor, that you will remember these days with wonder. Won't you, my darling—won't you? Come with me to-night—now—to my uncle the bishop—and be married. Will you?"

The girl, quiet in his arms, listened. When the deep, whispering voice had stopped she looked at him with her face brimful of sudden laughter but brimful of another look as well. "The old song of the serpent," she said. "The song that has charmed the birds all these thousands of years. And it is sweet. Because—because you're you. That seems to be such a reason. But the birds somehow are changing a little, Duncan darling. They—they can't flutter into your grasp and be satisfied nowadays.

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They—we're getting to be human beings, dear, and you'll like us much better when we're done. We're not going to be like men—don't worry. Am I a ruffian?" and the eyes, soft with strong feeling, danced at him. "We're the old eternal feminine, and we'll never lose it, and we never want to. But oh, Duncan—would you honor me if I gave up what I believe, if I deserted my flag to be happy?"

"I don't ask you to do a thing except marry me," the man said.

"No. But if I married you and every fibre of you revolted every time I made a speech—wouldn't I have to desert my flag or desert you? You'd drive me quite mad, Duncan, in a week."

"Then you won't marry me unless I come over to your flag? Is that it?"

The girl's little fists beat on his coat as she faced him. "Duncan! I'd not have you at any price if you gave up your principles for love of me. I wouldn't have it."

"Well, what in heaven's name would you have, Aileen? I only want you. But you're confusing me with split hairs till—till I'm desperate."

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She broke into laughter; then, swiftly, her voice was all sadness. "My dear," she said, "that's the tragedy. It's a deadlock. I won't have you under my colors unless you believe in them. I can't come under yours. And if I married you as things are I couldn't bear it. You'd resent it that I couldn't be influenced; I'd resent it that you should try to change the most vital thing in me. We couldn't be happy. Some people are. It's only a difference of political creed. But we take it too hard, we two. We can't—can we?"

"I can," the man persisted doggedly. "Once you're my wife I'd make you so happy you wouldn't need——"

"Oh!" The girl flew at him. "Do you think I want to be that kind—a doll, a chicken? Don't you see? Wouldn't you despise me if I gave up the burden and heat of the day, left it to my comrades—turned to the easy ways to be happy? Please say you'd despise me, Duncan! I can't stand it to have you treat me—like a toy kitten!"

"I see how you feel," the man admitted reluctantly, honestly. And then: "So it's hopeless!"

The bright face flashed to him. "The whole world

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seems full of hope," she said. "Somehow it's going to come right. Will you let me tell you what happened to-night?"

"No," he answered roughly. "I can't. I'm going to the front. I may not come back. You won't marry me. How can I listen quietly to a tale about what's keeping you from me?"

They were at her door. He stood in the shadowy entrance, holding her two hands in a desperate grip, staring at her, miserable, helpless.

"At least give me a word to go off with. Tell me once that you love me."

As she gazed up at him in the half-light she looked suddenly very pale and tired. "I'm going off, too," she said. And then: "Go. Fight for England and—for me."

The door opened and shut; he stood alone on the dark steps, dazed, somehow happy.

Beyond the hollow where the first-aid station stood sheltered, a mile away across level fields, a straight canal glittered. The sunset shone back from its quiet surface. Two rows of poplars shivered

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above it, blurring the reflection; a road ran near the water. It was like a peaceful picture by Hobbema.

"I'd forgotten there was anything green and quiet," the girl said to the woman next her.

The woman caught her arm, stared up. "Look!"

Two or three miles distant an object like a gigantic cigar crossing the clouds swam, high above village spire and windmills, toward the intrenchments behind whose far-extended lines the group of nurses stood.

"A dirigible," the girl spoke. "How bold they are getting to come so close to the advance! There's another—see!"

Behind each regiment of the brigade to which these women were assigned was a small first-aid station—as close as might be—four stations, for the brigade was a full one. Back of these, farther from the fighting, were again four hospital tents, equipped with all completeness possible. Still more to the rear, at the junction of two roads, was the large field-hospital. To the nearest of these islands of hope came orderlies with stretchers, running out of the hopelessness and horror, carrying things that had

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been men an hour before. And there nurses in glowing orange-red uniforms, the "Coals of Fire," as they called themselves, as they had come to be known through the armies, waited to do their grisly work, which was yet work of angels.

There had been battle upon battle—many battles in one; lines of armed men stretched for more than two hundred miles along a peaceful countryside. Blazing villages marked the advance of a nation of soldiers; dazed peasants, who wondered what the war was about, suffered and died along that red line; starved cattle, ruined fields, horrible heaps of bodies lay across it, ghastly, indecent; old, quiet cities, which had long ago lived through fiery baptisms, agonized innocently in a new horror; modern civilization had brought a power to make war titanic. Yet it had brought also something which was good. Those stations back of a brigade stood for a spirit, not strong enough yet, it seemed, to prevent bloodshed, but yet eager, if bloodshed must be, to soften its cruelty. It seemed a core of gentleness and hope which the large band of women known as "Coals of Fire" had established in the

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centre of the grimness called battle. Many a time a wounded man, lifting his head above groaning heaps, gazed about eagerly for a glimpse of the conspicuous, flame-colored, rough dresses, and when he saw them fell back relieved.

"They'll find us," many and many a time such a man cried, out of his pain. "The 'Coals of Fire' don't miss anybody."

"And they'll follow a chap in trouble to the gates of hell," a comrade on the bloody field would add. For the nurses there was no spot too dangerous, and they stretched their orders to the breaking-point in search for "chaps in trouble." Their courage was a proverb. Over and over the wounded under their hands, looking up to their faces, had said:

"What makes you so good to us? I thought suffrage women were cold-blooded and masculine"—for over England, over the world, it was known who the "Coals of Fire" were and what they had done. There had come to be a formula for answering this sort of speech, so often was it made. "We're just the old-time women," they said cheerfully, "and you're all our brothers, and we love you all."

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So that not the least seed of controversy was allowed in their new work, and, as old Evelyn Erskine had said: "The banner over them was" still "love." There was no talk of their cause. Yet again and again a wounded soldier smiled as they toiled over him and said: "Sister, if the 'Coals of Fire' want to vote when we get back to old England, we'll help. We know now."

There were a few slips from their war Bibles which soldiers found lying about where they had been. "Never talk about your cause and never forget it," was one. And "Anybody you can help is your best-beloved." And "Plant gentleness and grow justice." And over and over: "Coals of Fire—Coals of Fire. Heap them higher and higher."

Some, of course, broke down under the stress, but more developed an unguessed force. The out-of-doors air, the joy of pouring out all the time healing and hope to those desperately needing it, the necessity of strength, seemed to strengthen them like a miracle. It was a life of fearful strain yet of tremendous vitality.

Aileen O'Hara suddenly heard anew, off down at

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the front, a sullen boom, a sharp rattling of machine guns, the singing of shot, sounds which she had come to know and distinguish. She listened a moment, alert; then she groaned aloud. The fighting was on again.

"Futile; oh, so futile!" she cried. "To take those splendid boys, every one of them some woman's boy, and mangle them, and send them back to us to help a little if we can—so often just to make us watch them die."

For the thousandth time in her three months of service she was seized with a desperate revolt against the pitiful unreasonableness of the great shambles. "When women help rule, women who know the price of a life, there will be no wars"; the thought had formed in her mind over and over, but she had not spoken it, even to the other women—now was not a time for discussion; now was the time for action.

And with that here were orderlies coming up to the dressing-station, with a stretcher and something quiet lying on it, something whose brown khaki was wet and dark. The hospital-corps tag,

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affixed on the line of battle, told her trained eye that this patient was unable to walk; that he was also wounded in the head. Swiftly she was at work; the surgeon flung at her, as she handled the now familiar tools of the trade, brief syllables. She obeyed, turned with things needed to where the surgeon stood. The cap was over the face of the wounded man; the surgeon lifted it and the girl's pulse gave a leap and stopped. She had thought of this possibility; she had tried to be prepared; all that was nothing; the end of the world had come. He was lying before her, wounded, perhaps dead. She rocked a bit on her feet; everything seemed a long way off; it stabbed at her that now, now at this test moment, she was going to faint. Then, all at once, the strength that is not in us or of us, which has come at time of need in the experience of many, poured into this girl. When the surgeon, cutting away clothes, examining with swift gentleness, looked up at her from MacLeod he found her steady, quick, as always.

The bearers were coming in with more litters; the surgeons were all at work; there were patients

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waiting. "You can finish this; it's not likely to be fatal; get him to the ambulance station as soon as you can."

The surgeon was gone to the next case, and it was her fingers that were giving the vital first help to Duncan MacLeod. Steadily she worked, holding down emotion with a grip, using hands and eyes and brain as tools, disconnecting them from her personality. Only so might she do her absolute best, and no weakness must prevent that best from being done. The wound in the head, where a bit of bursting shell had stunned him, was dressed, and she was bending by the torn knee left by the surgeon ready to bandage when suddenly her eyes were drawn from her work, drawn as if by physical force to gray eyes that opened wide.

"You," he whispered. And then: "Is it you?"

The skilful fingers stopped a second. She looked at him, gasped, stared, and swiftly fell to bandaging again.

"Won't you—speak to me?"

The fingers with the white following bandage flew back and forth, back and forth. ag.

"I don't give a hang to get well, if you don't care

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the deep voice went on, a bit breathless. It was hard to talk. And then: "You don't care—or you'd speak. I'm just—one of the procession. You don't care."

The bandaging was finished. The big, war-blackened fingers, limp along the battered leg, were suddenly aware that they were held close. In the swinging half-light of the station no one of the busy grewsome scene saw or cared. "I didn't—dare speak—till I'd done the bandage. I might have g-gone to pieces. Duncan—quick—listen. I'm caring this way: if I could empty my life into a cup and give it to you I'd pour it this minute. I'm caring that way." In a flash she bent, and the kiss that she had never given him was on his lips. Then she was gone, and he was being carried again by men in hospital uniform back to the ambulance which would take him to the field-hospital.

An hour later the great battle-field was quiet. But across its length and breadth went another army, an army of mercy. Everywhere one saw through velvet darkness a flash of little electric torches, as hospital corps and nurses searched for the wounded.

"It's thim angels," a sorely hurt Irishman cried
as Aileen O'Hara bent over him, signalling to

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the bearers to bring a litter. "The saints bless ye, sister"; and then, lifted gently to the stretcher, "It's like a baby I'm feelin', wishin' I'd me mother to hold me hand," and a sob broke from exhausted body and soul.

A warm hand folded around his. "Let me be your mother, dear man," little Aileen O'Hara's voice spoke out of the darkness. "I'll hold your hand all the way, and all the way you're to be thinking how soon you'll be well again and going to the real mother in old Ireland."

The man was quiet as they made their way through the grisly place, but just before they got to the dressing-station his head turned and the girl felt hot tears on her hand that held his, and he put his lips to it as he might to the hem of the Virgin's dress.

"Somebody must be lovin' ye hard, ye little angel of a 'Coal of Fire,'" the Irishman spoke.

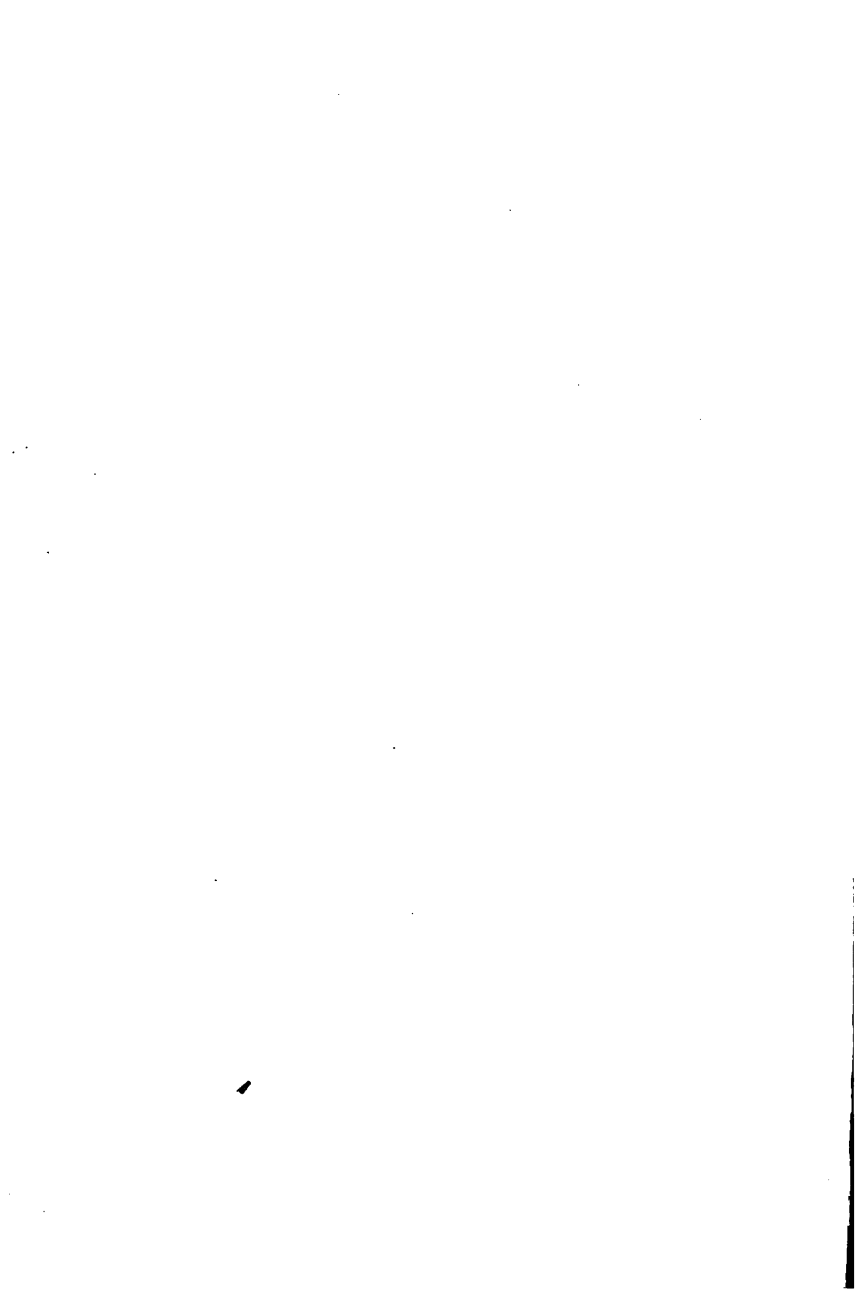
And the girl whispered back out of the night. "I'm thinking somebody is," she said.

It was almost to the day three years from the date of the meeting now known as "Coals-of-Fire night,"



the
ALONZO KIMBALL

"I didn't—dare speak—till I'd done the bandage."



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when there was a meeting again in London. The war was over. The army was not all home yet, but the nurses were back; yet not all, for some had gone down in the storm, as Aileen O'Hara had prophesied. They wore, those home again, the marks of those years of life given out by handfuls; many young heads had gone gray, many fresh faces lost their color; yet they had lived and helped. Is there anything yet discovered better to do with a life than to give it away? No regret had been heard from any one of those who had enlisted in the extraordinary movement called the "Coals of Fire," only thankfulness to have been of a great experience. And now that they were disbanded as nurses they gathered to the reorganization of the old cause.

The entire great hall engaged for their first public meeting had been sold out long before the date. There was an overflow meeting in a hall near by; there were speakers in the streets; everywhere a crowd appeared if it was only said that a "Coals-of-Fire" nurse was to be heard. And everywhere, everywhere, they were heard with respectful silence, which held itself in leash till it might break in mad

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enthusiasm, for what these women had done had pierced to the heart of the nation. The old jeers were quiet; the jeerers, the rowdies who had once howled down the women's voices, led the applause. There was no question now that, whatever the heads of the government might believe, the hearts of the populace were with the women.

Aileen O'Hara felt this, as every good speaker must feel the temper of an audience, and it exhilarated her as she walked down the platform. She stood there a second, facing the people massed to the walls; she was still fair-haired and little, but her face was worn and thin, and the vivid blue eyes had a look not there a year ago, the look of one who has gone through deep waters.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said, and at the three words the place was pandemonium. Her voice, the memory of what she had done and endured, was a match to a powder magazine. They stood up, the thousands and thousands of them, and waved their hats and their handkerchiefs, and shouted her name over and over, "Miss O'Hara—Aileen O'Hara," and "Coals of Fire—Coals of Fire," and sent up

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cheer upon cheer. And little Aileen O'Hara, astonished, in the sight of all of them, suddenly began to cry. She felt it coming; she tried hard to stop it, but it was as inevitable as taxes.

"Golf balls," she whispered to herself; "Stilton cheese; hairpins." It was a formula she had known to be efficient in stopping tears.

But it was of no use now. Everybody, everybody saw her eyes fill and tears roll down the pale cheeks. Then, suddenly, her face was in her hands and she had turned and fled precipitately. And with that half the auditorium, men as well as women, were crying, too. The hearts of the people were soft; almost every one there was in mourning; this little girl who had gone through ice and flame to nurse their soldier boys came close to them; they all knew what memories had broken down her self-control at the sound of their applause; no words could have spoken as eloquently as those unwelcome tears and that ignominious retreat.

In two minutes she was back, laughing, apologetic. "You'll have to forgive me," she cried with the old air of sure friendliness. "I wasn't dreaming

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I could be such a—such a baby. But you came right into my heart, and it wasn't—big enough." Her voice faltered; she went on quickly: "I'm not going to talk now—I can't. I'll wait till afterward and—get steady. But I'm thanking you for that welcome—" She wheeled and hurried back and sat down.

A practical speech followed from a well-known leader, proposing plans for a campaign. There was discussion, there were questions from the audience, and a few words of warm praise from a man about the work of the nurses and the changed status it had given suffragists throughout the country. Then Mrs. Illingworth, sitting on the platform, rose and came forward.

"I want to point out," she said in her deliberate tones, "that practical questions are now our affair. A large experiment has been tried. Our resources are exhausted. I was against the experiment; I believe now that no permanent good will come of it. I don't deny that there is a wide-spread emotional excitement in our favor. We are for the moment a fad. But it is emotional; it will prove temporary. The plain facts are that we have come out of this

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war with treasuries emptied, organizations broken up, many of our best workers dead or incapacitated, and, on the other side—what? An irresponsible sentiment which will last till the next sensation. I have no trust in a feeling aroused by the play of actors in the limelight of war; I have no belief in the gratitude of men; as through the ages they will take our heart's blood and push us back into the harness; they will talk of guarding sacred womanhood, while the mother of a month-old baby scrubs their floors and cleans their shoes. Yes, and they will dismiss her mercilessly, too, if she does it ill. Wait and see; wait till this wave of cheap enthusiasm is past; see if the men at the helm do not tell us that while the 'Coals-of-Fire' movement was a beautiful conception it had nothing to do with giving women the vote. They will be quite right; it had nothing to do with it. We've given all and gained nothing. Now we must begin at the beginning again, and the sooner we put aside sentiment and hope of result from a side issue, the sooner we get to work on the foundations of our wasted efforts, the better it will be."

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As always, the seething volcano within had burned through the icy crust of Ellen Illingworth's manner long before she finished. As always, when she stopped she was shaking with the violence of her feeling. As she walked slowly back to her chair the audience was still; one remembered that this woman had been six times in prison; one realized that she, if any one on earth, had an excuse for resentment; pity was the first response to this soul in the torment of a relentless hatred.

With that the light figure of Aileen O'Hara sprang forward again and she was talking eagerly. Instantly the buoyant, brave personality caught the audience into a brighter atmosphere. There was that about her flashing, friendly manner, her unexpected inflections, her mischief and her intensity and her beauty and the charm of her Irish speech, which few listeners could resist.

"I'm looking to be stood in the corner with my face to the wall," she began gayly, "because I'm going to contradict Mrs. Illingworth. I've got to contradict her."

And the audience, for something in the voice and manner, laughed consumedly.

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"Much that she said was only too true—we all know it. But—" She paused and the delicate face seemed slowly to flame like a transparent flower with a lighted lantern back of it. "What if we haven't any money and everything's broken up and"—the clear voice lowered—"and if some of us have laid down our lives as we knew some of us must? What of that? We bought something with that price. We've given—that's the big thing. We've given that to the country which can't be forgotten; nobody can take the joy of it from us. I'm believing it's we that can

'Watch the thing we gave our lives to, broken
And stoop and build it up with worn-out tools.'

We're big enough—the thing is big enough for that. Is there any one here who can't feel in his pulses what it would be to lead a forlorn hope—the glory and the sure destruction—for an ideal? It was something like that with the 'Coals of Fire.' We did it not so much hoping to get anything as to vindicate the greatness, the unselfishness of our cause. We did it not as Englishwomen, or as mere human women, but in a body as the women who believe in women's freedom. And everybody recog-

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nized it. Not a poor, wounded soldier who chaffed us in his friendly, rough way but showed by that chaffing that he knew us for soldiers, too, under our flag of freedom. And they loved us; we conquered their affection. I'm not believing it's temporary and emotional. Those men whose lives we had the joy of saving, they're home, or coming home, and they're going to tell their families, and all"—her arms spread out to take in tens of thousands—"all those families of soldiers are going to be our friends. Why—they said so."

She wheeled and went back to her place. When people got their breath from the sudden stop they began to laugh first and then to applaud. This was certainly the spoiled child of audiences. Then "Come back," they cried, and "Hear, hear!" and "Come back and finish." With that one was gradually aware of a tall young officer in the uniform of a cavalry colonel who, standing in the pit, was patiently insisting on speaking. By degrees, as it quieted, the entire place was facing toward the soldierly figure with its determined air of something that must be said.

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"I'm just back to-night from the front," the deep voice began.

Instantly there was a roar, and the officer's brown face went two shades darker up to his forehead.

"I—I wasn't bidding for that," he explained, as they quieted again. "I was explaining my uniform. I came straight from Paddington Station, don't you see?" He went on: "I'm no talker, but I can't hear this question as to the feeling in the army about the 'Coals of Fire' and not give evidence. Miss O'Hara's right. There's never been anything seen like the devotion to the red angels, as the men call them. Every ignorant private knows what they did—gave over the great fight they were putting up against the government, and in the hour of need threw their whole strength to help the government. That's patriotism, don't you know? It's more; it's Christianity. And the army realized it. I've heard my men talking and I've heard what other officers had to say—it's all the same story. It was quite understood that they were acting as a body, and it made their flag, as Miss O'Hara calls

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it, conspicuous at a moment when the men had time to think about it, when they were lying wounded. Many came to the long days of the hospital straight from the hands of the nurses; they naturally got thinking about those women—I did. I”—he hesitated, went on with an effort—“I got back to my command later, but I thank God for the shell that wounded me.”

He stopped, and only one of those who heard him knew why.

Then he went on: “While I was laid up I thought. I’d been a keen anti-feminist, I suppose you’ll call it. But it came to me, lying there, that three-fourths of my opposition was because it was pleasant to believe that, in some mysterious way, I was better fitted than a woman to choose between Jones, Liberal, and Smith, Conservative. I realized that I’d pooh-poohed the whole thing and that it wasn’t fair play.

“I hadn’t thought of applying fair play to women. Chivalry and devotion, of course, but it was rather a shock to have it come to me that men didn’t give their dearest—as a rule—a common chance to

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their own say. It came to me that if women are fitted to be prime ministers they ought to have the chance. If they're not, they won't make good.

Wouldn't I be indignant to be limited to a fixed set of things on the women's say-so? Well, rather. Why shouldn't a high-spirited woman feel the same? I've got to think, now, that to everything living is due the chance to develop in every way it is capable of developing. That's justice. The best sort, men or women, prefer justice to indulgence. And women get too much of the second and too little of the first. Look at the war nurses! They risk their lives; you all know that. Often they're under fire; always they're overworked; plenty of them drop in their tracks; they face death every day. In spite of limitations, the 'Coals of Fire' managed to distinguish themselves for conspicuous bravery. Also there's one precious thing which they inevitably gave up in going to the front—no nurse who has been through that is ever young again. But did they have the spur of military pageantry which means so much with an army? Not at all. No drum or fife or brass band or bagpipes, no splendid marching in battle

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array. No help of that sort to keep up their spirits. Just the dead and dying to tend; the hardship and the drudgery. That's unjust. Too often it's been that way through history; it's really wonderful that a couple of thousand years hasn't taken all initiative out of women. Why, it seems to me that the fact that many women are anti-suffragists is one of the most pathetic facts in the affair. It's like prisoners we've heard of who, released after twenty or thirty years, wander back next day to their prisons and beg to be put in. They're frightened at daylight; they don't know how to move without their chains."

The tall officer seemed suddenly aware that a large audience was listening to him rather breathlessly.

"I'm talking too long," he said, and flushed as cries of "No, no," answered him. "I meant only to put in my testimony about the 'Coals of Fire.' I believe that their war action has swung much of the nation into sympathy with their political ideals; I do not believe it will be temporary; the government will be forced to recognize a popular demand. In fact, there are rumors now that the government

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is impressed. For my own part, I gave serious attention for the first time to the question of suffrage on account of this movement, with the result that I am a convert. I know that the same thing happened to other men. I believe that it happened to thousands. It seems to me that, serious attention being granted, it's got to happen to everybody."

The strong, candid young face, lit by the fire of a generous sentiment, became in a flash all shocked surprise. The man had his watch in his hand.

"Oh! I beg a thousand pardons," he said. "I didn't know I was doing a bookful. You must be bored. Thanks awfully for listening. So sorry." He sat down.

Half an hour later, as the car slid away down the dim street—"Not for me?" she demanded. "It wasn't for me?"

"Not one word," he threw back. "I'd have had to say it if you'd never lived."

She gave a sigh of contentment.

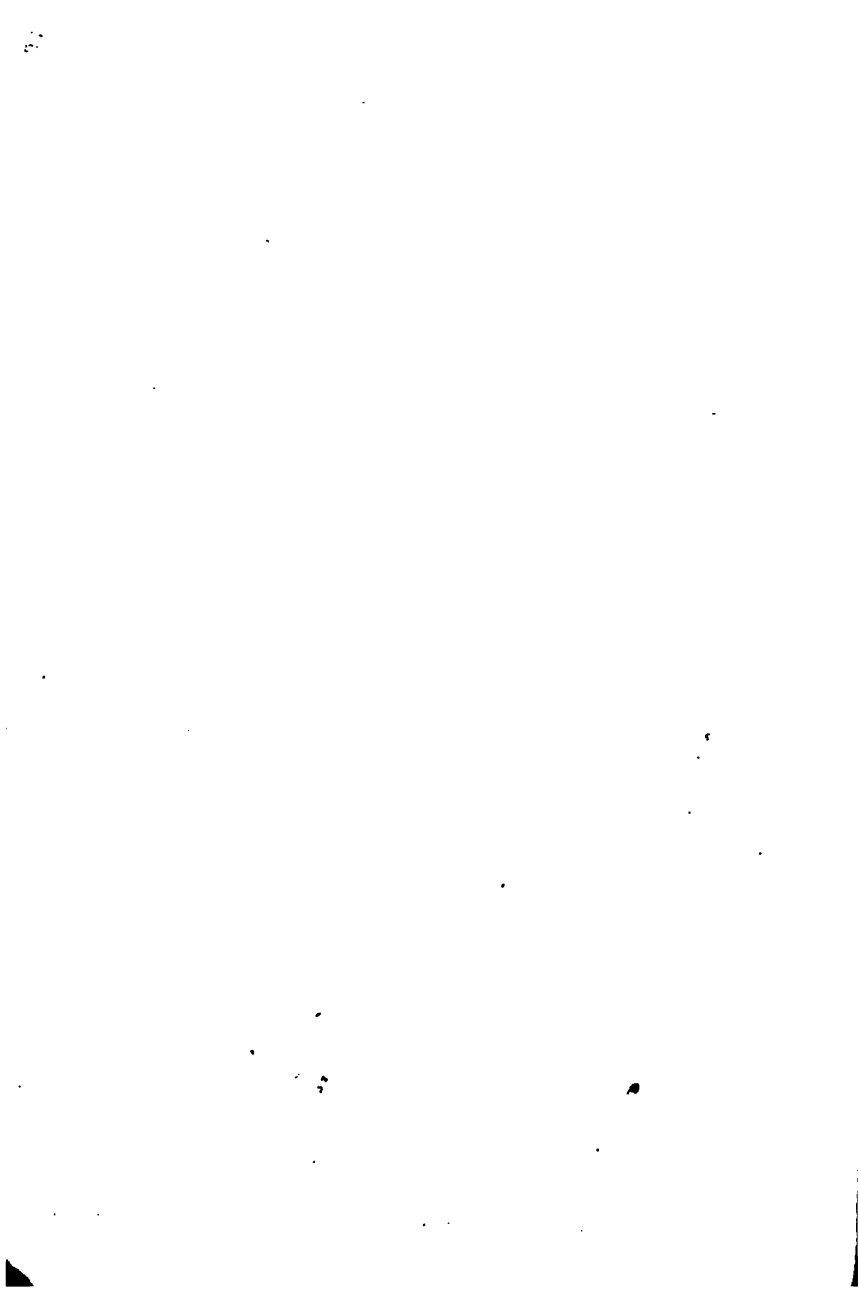
"But," the man went on, and his arm was around her and her two hands close in one of his, "but

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I did know that—it would make a difference. I've come under your colors; I'm beaten; I give you my sword. What are you going to give me?"

In the darkness of the car, with the flash-lights of London streets coming and going, she put a hand up and drew his face down to the face that was on his shoulder. "Everything," she whispered. "Everything."

THE VERY LILAC ONE



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IT was Decoration Day morning; it was hot; she stood there. The fresh white blouse had cost \$1.93 at Owen's bargain-counter; the white duck skirt—patch-pockets, wide belt, and all—had stood for \$3.47 at the same sale. She saw his eyes lift to the white Panama hat.

"Pretty, isn't it?" she demanded. "But it didn't cost much. I watched the sales for this shape, because I'd seen one in Curran's window, and I got it at \$1.50; you know really good Panamas come awfully high. And I had this scarf last year, so I washed it and copied the way of putting it on from the one in Curran's. That one cost \$25.00."

"And I dare say yours is prettier," Sandy stated proudly.

Slim lines, sparkling eyes, youthful radiance of a face set in golden-brown waves under the Panama hat made the seven-dollar effect more successful than many a *tout ensemble* of twenty times the ex-

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pense. There was more also than the mere gift of dress—there was restraint, simplicity, a lack of silk sweater and cheap jewelry. One felt with approval, looking at this little stenographer on \$10 a week, that she was not insisting that you take her for a rich woman of leisure with five thousand a year for clothes. One got two or three ideas out of a considering glance at the young face: brains, self-reliance, imagination, sense of humor; such things played cheerfully in and out of the hazel eyes. Sandy McAllister, staring at her, knew all of this, but, being a dumb Scotchman, what he said was: "You look very nice, Annie."

That contented Annie. A shining look came into the hazel eyes. Sitting up late to wash and iron the blouse and skirt, studying Curran's windows, and working over the twist of that scarf—it was all worth while. Sandy said she looked nice. It was a strong remark for Sandy.

"Let's go. We don't want to miss that trolley. Isn't it a perfect day?" she threw at him happily, and started down the steps.

But Sandy caught her wrist, and held her off a

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second while he stared again, and his silent heart bumped with joy. She was his girl; it was Decoration Day morning, a holiday; it was warm and bright; she stood there, looking like this, a picture of delight; she was his own girl. "Yes, let's go now," said Sandy.

They went and went and went. They got seats together in the trolley, but were pretty well jammed in the steamer, and laughed and did not care, and at last they came to the Land of Heart's Desire, known to the rich as a lovely spot spoiled by cheap excursions. There they could wander off without a care, very far away indeed from the crowd, till they came to the woods by the sea. They sat down under the pines with marvellous sweet smells of ocean and earth and hot pine-needles closing them into an enchanted valley. They held each other's hands, and sometimes spoke a word and mostly were silent. After an hour of such inchoate bliss they fell to talking about Sandy's business. He had just bought the little drug-store at the corner of Bath and River Streets. Sandy called it a "chemist's shop," but the American for that is

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"drug-store." By whatever name, not yet was he making enough for the two to get married.

"If I could afford to advertise well, it would bring things quite right," Sandy said. "The little shop has a fair list of patrons, and we've got the agency for Adams's Lorelei Hair Tonic, and that's a very good thing. But we need advertising. If only I could get a new way that wouldn't come too dear. I'm not clever at imagining things like you, Annie," stated Sandy humbly.

Annie, pondering, flashed a smile. "What's the good of me imagining things if I can't help you with it, Sandy?" she inquired, and fell to pondering again.

The white Panama lay on the pine-needles; the wind whipped small curls about her forehead; the girl had wonderful hair, long and very curly, an unusual combination. Sandy lifted a hand and touched it shyly; he could never get over his astonishment that he might do these things.

"You don't need any hair tonic, Annie," he said, and smiled. "I could put you in the window for an advertisement, maybe, though."

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Annie's hazel eyes lifted quickly, and her brows drew together with mental effort. She had a thought. "Wait a minute—don't speak," she commanded. "There's an idea coming."

And Sandy, to whom nothing was easier than silence, waited, gazing in respect at this girl whose brain worked in a way which his could not follow, this girl who was his own girl.

Then Annie laughed out. "It's good," she said. "I believe it will go. It's not fixed yet, but I can wiggle it out. Listen, Sandy."

And so, sitting in the woods by the sea, her hand in her lover's, laughing, happy, adding step to inspired step, Annie wiggled it out.

Sometimes, going along a city street late at night, one wonders how it would be if the fronts of the houses could be lifted off. There would be rows of people at odd angles asleep in beds; where a light glimmers there might be a girl in evening dress, home from a ball, dancing a reminiscent fox-trot down her room; or a woman happily writing a letter; or a man anxiously pacing a room, maybe; or

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perhaps nurses working over a sick-bed; all the tragedy and sentiment of life is likely shut behind those long walls which may not be lifted away. But of a morning about mail time, in broad daylight, the walls seem mere boxes holding commonplace or comedy. By the white magic of fiction a story-writer may go about a town—why not?—and know whatever is necessary to the situation.

On a morning, then, soon after May 30, Decoration Day, the postmen of the rising city of Brightwater delivered the mail. The bell buzzed at Reginald Towner's house as Reginald himself was sitting down to breakfast. Mrs. Towner, having breakfasted in her room an hour before, was, nevertheless, present to pour coffee for her spoiled darling, who liked this ceremony. The children had been kissed and packed off to school. The butler brought in the mail and laid it by the mistress of the house as she finished the sacred cup and set down glittering silver.

"Quite a lot," remarked Reginald, stirring his coffee luxuriously. Mrs. Towner was sliding envelopes through her fingers. "What's that very lilac

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one? Scented; I can smell it over here." Mrs. Towner dropped seven others and contemplated the lilac one. "It's to you." She looked up at him.

"Well?" Reginald Towner boasted that his wife opened all his letters.

"It's a woman's writing."

"Well?"

Mrs. Towner opened the lilac one. Reginald tasted his coffee, smiled benignantly, turned his attention light-heartedly to a muffin.

"For heaven's sake!" gasped Mrs. Towner into the middle of the muffin.

"What?" The muffin poised in mid-flight.

"Well!"

"Well what?"

"Oh!" and then: "This mail is no place for me, Reginald. I'd better——"

"You'd better read it aloud," finished Towner, the blameless, the frank.

Mrs. Towner looked to see if Jennings was safely departed. "If you say so." There was a thin edge to her voice. "*You* may not be astonished. *I* am."

"Read it."

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Slowly and with distributed emphasis she read as follows:

“‘DEAR MR. TOWNER:

“‘You will not perhaps remember me, but I can never forget you. I have seen you on the street many times and admired you more than I can possibly say——’

“One s in possibly,” interjected Mrs. Towner, *sotto voce*.

“‘Please don’t think me a bold and forward girl——’

“Huh,” threw in Mrs. Towner.

“‘—but it would make me so happy if you would talk to me for a few minutes, and surely there could be no harm in that.’”

One eyebrow of Mrs. Towner lifted.

“‘Would you, will you, give me a little interview on the corner of Bath and River Streets at nine o’clock Wednesday night? Please don’t think me a foolish, bold girl——’

“Oh, no ! Certainly not !” remarked Mrs. Towner.

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“—but do, do come, for this is no common feeling that makes me beg you to, and I am

“ ‘Yours (if you want me)

“ ‘(Miss) CURLY BROWN.’

“ ‘Miss, Curly, Brown,’ ” staccatoed Mrs. Towner and fixed her wedded husband with a glance like a ramrod.

The wedded one stared back. By slow degrees his mouth formed three words. “I’ll be damned !”

“Quite likely,” agreed Mrs. Towner with chilliness.

“Let’s see that.”

The very lilac one flew across the tulips and was prevented from landing in the butter-pats. Absorbedly the man read it, and the woman, exasperated, saw a slow smile broaden—a serene, altogether delighted smile, which permeated his face. “Foolish child,” murmured Reginald Towner in gentle accents. And then, sharply: “Never saw the writing in my life,” he pronounced. “Don’t know a blessed thing about it.” With that he was grinning widely again, and something in that well-known

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contagious smile suddenly set Mrs. Towner smiling, too.

"Reggie, you old devil! Don't you?" she shot at him.

"On my word, not a blessed thing."

Mrs. Towner was a handsome, big person with a face like a lovable boy; she liked to deserve her husband's statement that she was "the squarest woman on earth." Here was a chance. "All right. I believe you," she said heartily. "What are you going to do?"

"What would you?"

Mrs. Towner reflected. Then—"I'd go," she answered, and the admiring grin of a comrade across the table was reward for any effort to be broad-minded.

"You're a perfectly good sport, Madge," said Towner. "Dollars to doughnuts there isn't another woman in town who'd come up smiling like that. But of course I won't go. Awfully—er-rer—undignified. Family man—son twenty years old—ridiculous. Some foolish child." He was grinning rather sheepishly now under the sweeping mustache. That Towner was good-looking was a fact not to be

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concealed even from himself. The sleepy gray eyes were full of expression, the architecture of his face was splendidly high-bred; one forgave him easily that he was slightly, oh, very slightly, bald.

"You old heart-smasher," Mrs. Towner went on abusively; "you Man-that-Mows-'em-Down-in-the-Streets—look at me!" Mrs. Towner threw back her head and tapped herself, and did a fair imitation of her lord's conscious grin. "Pretty chesty, eh! She's seen you—she admires you—more than she can possibly—with one s—tell you! Not so unpleasant, is it, Reggie? The lovely ladies adore you still, don't they? Oh, lots! Too bad you hate yourself so this morning, isn't it, Reggie?"

Mrs. Towner's language was commonplace, but her copy of the flattered masculine, her falsetto bass, and stroked-kitten manner were distinctly funny. The audience shook with laughter.

"You wouldn't be so rotten bad in vaudeville, Madge," he indorsed the performance, and turned to a fresh muffin. "But—yes, more coffee—I'm surprised at you a bit for advising me to pay attention to the thing."

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"Reginald Towner—" (she brushed the lace back from her wrist) "Reginald Towner, if I were a man I'd die of curiosity till I got to Bath and River Streets Wednesday night."

"Would you?" inquired Reginald conversationally. Mrs. Towner went on.

"Tell you what, old boy. You go, with my blessing, on one condition: that you'll honestly tell me every syllable that happens."

"Of course I will—I mean I would. But of course I don't consider going." There was an uncertain note in the firm words. It continued on a rapid down-grade. "Do you—really wish me to go?"

Mrs. Towner exploded into laughter. "Do I wish! As a favor to me, don't you know! Well—you go—and Larrie and I will trot along on the side, and watch your step."

"Not much you won't! Larrie!" Larrie being the twenty-year-old. The real article in firmness this time, and a tone of horror in that "Larrie!"

Mrs. Towner chortled with glee. "Not a bad rise," she commented. "No, Reggie, dear; I wouldn't do a mean thing like that. But I give my full con-

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sent to your breaking loose and meeting Miss Curly Brown, if you'll promise to tell me about it. Mind, now, you're susceptible, old Reggie. A sweet young thing—admires you more than she can possibly—with one s—tell you. You'll have to be a strong, firm character. But run along and play, and then come home to mother. That's the scheme. Isn't it?"

Reginald Towner pulled at that long, fair mustache thoughtfully. He stopped pulling and imbibed a last drop of coffee. He set the cup down. "Jove, Madge—I can't let you be more of a sport than I am. That is the scheme. I'll do it."

Lilac was an agitating color to more than one Brightwater breakfast-table. The mayor and his new wife, a young woman fifteen years his junior, got their mail shortly before the Towners. Events began much the same: a very lilac envelope, manly innocence, feminine alertness. But this culminated differently; Mrs. Mayor was unhappily not of the square type, and was jealous about her lately acquired politician. So that in five minutes the loving bride and groom were arguing.

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"I have to look into these things, deary," the leader of the Democrats urged. "I'm the mayor of this town. I have to know what's doing."

"You don't have to meet Miss Curly Browns on street corners nights," contested Mrs. Mayor. "That hasn't a thing to do with running the town."

"You don't know," the mayor reasoned darkly. "One can never tell. These Republican henchmen are a wicked lot—wily, corrupt, tricky; queer things happen."

"Well, one queer thing isn't going to happen—you're not going to meet any Miss ——"

The mayor interrupted. "Deary," he stated with formality, "I wouldn't give orders—to me."

But Mrs. Mayor had thrown her compass overboard. "I *will* give orders about this. You shall not go."

The mayor rose and stood; a trifle pale he was. "Dorothy, I shall use my own judgment."

"Oh, don't go, Frederick," wailed Dorothy, and burst into tears.

The mayor began to show excitement. "Don't you see, you've forced my hand—I've got to go,"

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he let off in flights. "I've *got* to go." The mayor was a short, bald man; he threw out his arms and bobbed his head. Dorothy lifted a tear-stained face from the breakfast napkin and swabbed one eye with a minor handkerchief. "If you go," she announced solemnly, "you need never darken these doors again." She spoke with authority; they were Dorothy's doors; among her charms one counted a grist of shekels.

The mayor was silent a long half-minute, then his arms flew out again in a gesture of abandoned recklessness. As Christopher Columbus, impelled by scientific desire for knowledge, so was the mayor. His head bobbed; his voice went falsetto. "I've got to know what's up. I've *got* to go," stated the mayor.

A magic wand might indeed melt away walls from all the breakfast-rooms in Brightwater, but one may not look at all of them. Time fails. A glimpse more and the rest must be taken for granted.

Colonel Bigelow, boyish, big, clean-cut of mind and body, looked over the mail while his wife—

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who was very much his wife, and you'd better know it at once—poured his coffee. The girls, her girls, not his, had gone to school; the maid had disappeared to the pantries. He flipped a pronouncedly lilac envelope across the table; he laughed cheerfully.

"That's amusing," he said. "Read that, Girlie."

Mrs. Bigelow did not strike one as a "girlie," but fond parents had so nicknamed her in early youth, and she had clung to the name like grim death. She was several over forty, four or five years older than the colonel, buxom, handsome in a Napolconic way, with bright color and abundant hair, but high-shouldered and short-armed, of a good, compressed figure, strenuously youthful. She was intelligent, direct, capable, one of the women who with all good qualities have not a ray of charm. The colonel, being a cousin, had rescued her from a beast whom she had carelessly married, and generously married her himself. One would know that the colonel was likely to do about that.

"Funny, isn't it?" inquired the colonel.

But Mrs. Bigelow, reading with set face, saw no

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joke; humor was not her strong point. "I call it impertinent," she announced. "Of course you'll pay no attention?"

The colonel rumbled his hair—it was going a little thin on top. "Well—I don't know," he reflected. "Rather a lark to go and see what the little beggar has to say—eh?"

Mrs. Bigelow's face set further. "I ask you to do no such thing, Henry," she brought out. "I'm your wife. What right has any other woman to 'admire you,' as this"—tapping the letter—"bold creature says."

The colonel grinned. "I wouldn't prevent the sweet things from admiring me if they want to," he reasoned ingenuously. "I don't mind that. That doesn't hurt anybody. But I won't go if you object. I—just thought—it might be a manner of lark. But if you——"

"I do object, Henry," Mrs. Bigelow stated warmly. "Please promise that you won't do it."

"Promise! I said I wouldn't. That's enough, I hope."

The colonel got up impatiently. He had made

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her his wife; she had a right to every consideration, every gentleness, from him. But sometimes it did feel as if he would like to kick loose into freedom for a while. It is a mistake to let a man get that feeling.

"Thank you, Henry dear," said Mrs. Bigelow impressively and with intense gentleness, and the ungrateful colonel choked back a one-syllabled remark.

"All right, Girlie. Nothing to thank me for. I don't give a damn." And so the one syllable got said.

"I wish I could have a proscenium box," Mrs. Towner ejaculated fervently.

Mr. Towner had come in from the hall, where Jennings had just put him into his quietest overcoat—and he owned some noisy ones—and pressed a gentle-mannered soft hat into his hand. Even at that, Madge Towner considered, he looked conspicuously handsome and well dressed; it was difficult to disguise the good looks of Reginald Towner. It was eight forty-five of "Wednesday night," and

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he was about to attempt the adventure of Miss Curly Brown; he looked rather sheepish; it is unusual to start to a rendezvous with an unknown maiden of alluring name with the cordial co-operation of one's wife; it is comfortable, but it also detracts from the joy of feeling oneself a perfect devil. His wife kissed him.

"Heaven's choicest blessings go with you, you old rake," she flung at him affectionately, and Jennings opened the door; and Towner, launched on an "affair" by his wife's own hands, trotted down the street.

"Funny," he murmured as he went along. "I feel a good deal like a fool."

Meanwhile, the mayor, after fiddling over the house, appeared at the same hour before a gloomy Mrs. Mayor—he also coated and hatted.

"I'm going to the city hall for an hour," he stated coldly. Relations had been strained since yesterday.

"Oh—the city hall!" repeated Dorothy with sarcasm. Then, rising to her five feet eight, and shooting an arm aloft with tragedy: "Frederick Kleiner," she intoned, "if you go and meet that

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brazen woman to-night, it is the end. You need never darken these doors again."

The mayor stared, petrified a second, and then his hands went out and his bald head bobbed in the combination gesture which seemed inevitable to the case. "I've *got* to go," bleated the mayor.

And went.

The colonel sat quietly smoking his cigar that night, and was deep in the papers, when Girlie, his wife, who had gone up-stairs with a toothache immediately after dinner, appeared in ample billows of a *négligée* of vicious cherry silk.

"Henry," she moaned, "I'm afraid you'll have to go and get me something to stop this agony. Can't you take the car——"

Henry was on his feet, all sympathy and readiness. "Why, surely," he said. "I'll go instantly. Let me see—the nearest drug-store is"—he ruminated—"Bath and River, I think."

"Yes, that's it. Oh, do hurry. I'm suffering terribly, Henry love."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Henry love. "Take a drink of whiskey. I'll be back in a jiffy."

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"Bath and River." He said the names of the streets over again as he turned on the lights and opened the car door. What was it, recently, with which that address was associated? Suddenly it came to him, and, hand on gear-lever, he hesitated. Then he chuckled. He had said he would not go to Bath and River Streets to-night. No, he had not. He had said he would not meet Miss Curly Brown. Well? Was he going to meet her? He was going to get toothache medicine for his wife. Of course, there were other drug-stores! But this was the nearest; Mrs. Bigelow had begged him to hurry. What nonsense to hesitate about a footless bit of silliness! Then the colonel grinned broadly in the darkness; it *was* a manner of lark; the colonel had plenty of boyishness in him still. The lever slid into low gear; the car crawled out, complaining in bass, changed its note, and spun down the street and around the corner.

It was about five minutes before nine o'clock that night when the corner of Bath and River Streets began to assume an uncommon air of liveliness. The

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policeman, strolling across the way, decided that there was a meeting; shortly he began to wonder why the men didn't go in to their meeting. It was a well-behaved crowd; the policeman recognized some Brightwater celebrities as he sauntered among them. There was the mayor—the officer touched his helmet, but the mayor seemed annoyed to be saluted, which surprised the officer. There was J. T. Hodson, president of the Second National Bank; there was Reginald Towner, the millionaire; the “swell” of the town; there was Doctor Hugh Gray, head of the college on the hill; there was Judge Johnson, and Thomas Hamilton, of Hamilton Brothers, and Emmons, the leading tailor, and perhaps two dozen more.

There was something in the manner of these as they arrived which puzzled the policeman: each seemed surprised to see the others; some halted, hesitated, and then walked on quickly, but walked back again. The officer's observation extended over a very short period, three minutes, five minutes; the crowd collected almost instantaneously. With that, in the big window of the little drug-store

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something was doing. A white curtain veiled it from the eye of man, and behind that curtain there were fireworks. Red and green and violet lights played over the white surface; harmless explosions exploded. The curtain appeared to be calling attention to itself, and each one of the thirty or forty or fifty men standing uneasily about paid attention, stopped short in his movement of just going on, and watched. After three minutes of such challenge up rolled the curtain before the transfixed gaze of perhaps a hundred eyes, disclosing the show-window set as a small stage.

Moreover, it was well set. Rocks were in the foreground—stage rocks, but dimmed by expert lighting into a convincing islet. Beyond a painted river the background rambled swiftly into vineyards zig-zagging steeply, with blue sky above. It was good scenery; one felt the Rhine flowing around those rocks—and behold the Lorelei!

She arose from canvas depths, a slim figure in clinging sea-green something, a small gold harp in her hand, and about her a loose glory of gold-brown rippling hair. With that she was sitting on a ledge,

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defined against pale-gray stone, and the spot-light showed her shifting the fillet which bound the waves of hair away from her face. She shifted it swiftly, and in a flash a placard swung out under the spot-light which read in distinct lettering: "Miss Curly Brown."

A manner of murmur ran through the hypnotized crowd outside the drug-store window, and Doctor Gray, head of the university, was heard to mutter: "That scenery is from the Empire Theatre."

But no man stirred from his place except to push toward the window: Miss Curly Brown engaged herself at once in combing her wonderful hair with a bright gilt comb, and one became aware that a concealed Victor in the immediate neighborhood was making music.

"With a comb of gold she combs it
And sings a song the while;
'Tis a strange and wondrous music,
For the heart it doth beguile,"

sang Alma Glück in velvet tones from the Victor. And the spot-light shifted, and the little stage

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blurred, and when it was clear again, behold the Lorelei still manipulating the comb of gilt through the cloud of hair! but the placard now read: "Adams's Lorelei Hair Tonic makes hair grow on rocks." The Lorelei dropped the comb and twanged discreetly at her harp, and Alma Glück coincided melodiously with rhythmical remarks about

"This with her wonderful singing
The Lorelei hath done."

Another blur of light and darkness, and the changing placard bore a new legend.

"Adams's Lorelei Hair Tonic," it read. "All such as are good sports will walk in and buy a bottle. Makes hair grow on rocks."

The Lorelei, with a twentieth-century skip, was gone from the window, and thirty or forty or fifty laughing men, in varying stages of sheepishness, were prodding each other into the little drug-store, where a tall young Scotchman behind the counter found much trouble in waiting on them fast enough.

"Tell me about it, Reggie, quick," the handsome woman with the boyish face begged half an hour

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later in the Towners' great library. And Reggie told her, every item, and the two chuckled and shouted, like the comrades they were, over the tale till midnight.

"It was a very clever advertisement. And the man said the girl planned it all to help him get a start? We'll go there for *everything*, Reggie, from now on," said big-hearted Mrs. Towner.

"No; stay away—don't touch me—you've got to leave me to-morrow," sobbed Mrs. Mayor, and was astounded to see her Frederick go off into unfitting laughter.

"Listen, Dolly darling," said Frederick.

"Dolly darling!" She listened, she hesitated, and was lost. For the silver-tongued Frederick told the tale well. His Dolly, to speak the truth, was glad of a retreat from the strong position she had taken and grateful to the unknown girl who was not clutching after her hero. She laughed to the point of tears.

"I ought to be angry at you, Freddy," she said, with her arm around his neck. "For you went in

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spite of me. But I can't, because you were so well, so beeyutifully sold. The girl was a wonder to think up that stunt. Just to help her sweetheart. Say, Freddy, we'll go there for all our drugs after this, won't we, hey?"

And Freddy, well-contented, said yes, "we" would.

"Henry, what—was the mazzer? Did the car break d-down? I had to take whiskey, as you said. I—I think I took—good deal."

Colonel Bigelow, regarding his eminently proper Girlie, grinned sardonically. "I think you did. You're in a state of beastly intoxication," he pronounced. "Here's your stuff. I'm glad the tooth's better, only don't form the habit."

"Hennery!" Girlie threw the name at him in waves, and then spoiled her indignation with a simper. "My Hennery!"

With that her Hennery told the tale of the Lorelei. Mrs. Bigelow, softened with that demon rum, who certainly takes the temporary edge off things, considered.

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"Hennerly," she spoke, with careful enunciation, "I believe that it was a—a—an extremely good lesson for all those flip—flippant men. Not you, Hennerly love. *You* aren't flip—flippant. You were at—attending to your own wife. Wasn't he?"

Henry grinned. "Well—mostly," he agreed.

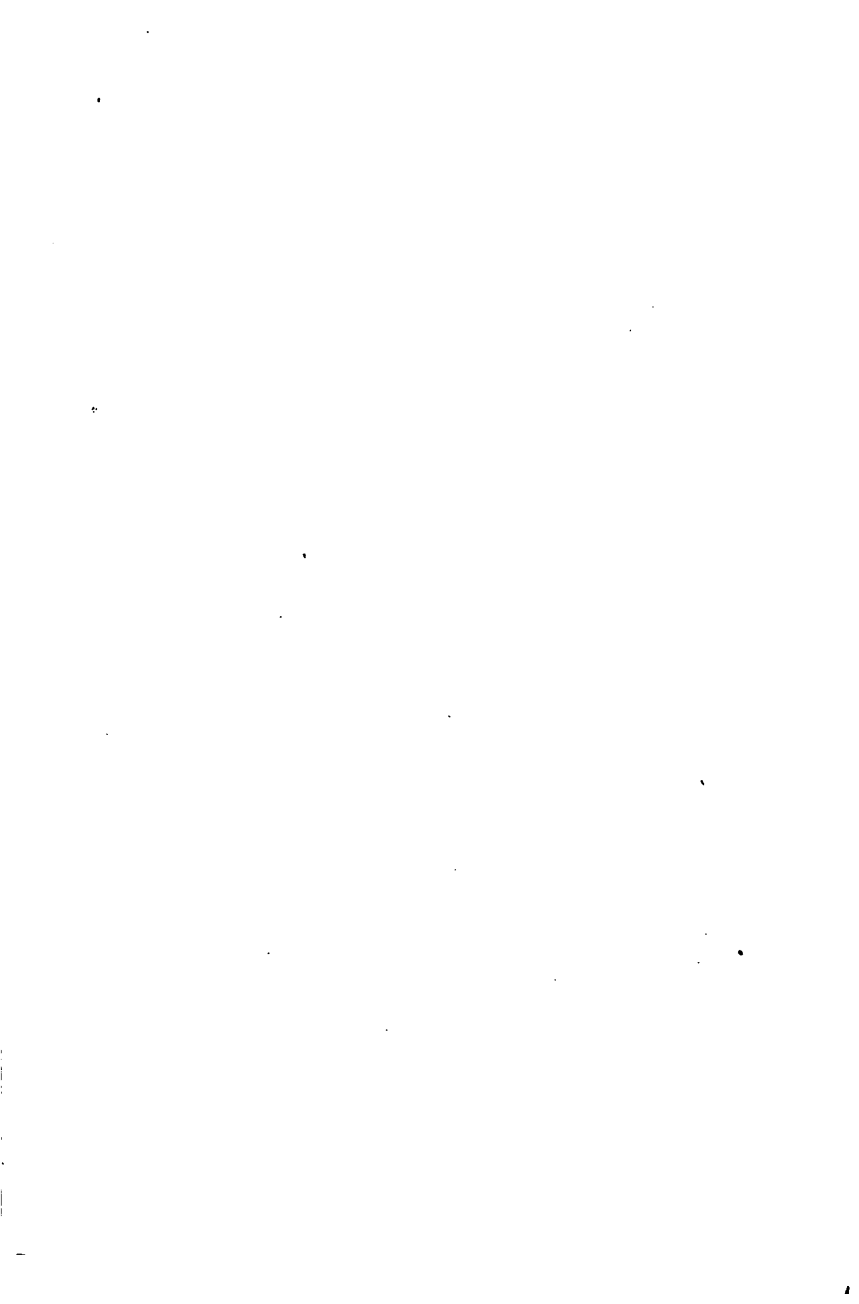
"You were, Hennerly love," Mrs. Bigelow pronounced. "But it served all the others right. And that—and that young girl—I owe her an—an apology. She was simply at—attending to her own husband, or fiancé, anyhow. I think well of those young people, Hennerly. I'll go to that shug-drop—shup-drog, no, drup-shog hereafter for whatever we get in that line."

"All right, Girlie. Good for you," said the colonel amiably, and with one more reminiscent grin took up his half-read paper.

Meanwhile, as all over the town men told the story to or kept it from their wives, in the little room behind the drug-store Annie and Sandy gloated. The money-drawer was before them, and they swapped details of the evening's success.



"I think they quite enjoyed it, Sandy."



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"Such luck, me having a brother at the Empire, and him being chums with the scenery man and the light man, and them all being so friendly to me, Sandy."

Sandy murmured a word through the tinkle of silver.

"And then the house being dark this evening so they could come. And wasn't it a smart idea of Jimmie Peters about that Lorelei piece? Though you were doubtful, first off. But it got across, and it looked awfully pretty, Jimmie said. How much, Sandy? No—never! \$75.40! Well, they did all walk up like men and buy the tonic, now, didn't they? And they were that pleasant about it, laughing and joking each other. I think they quite enjoyed it, Sandy."

Sandy grinned.

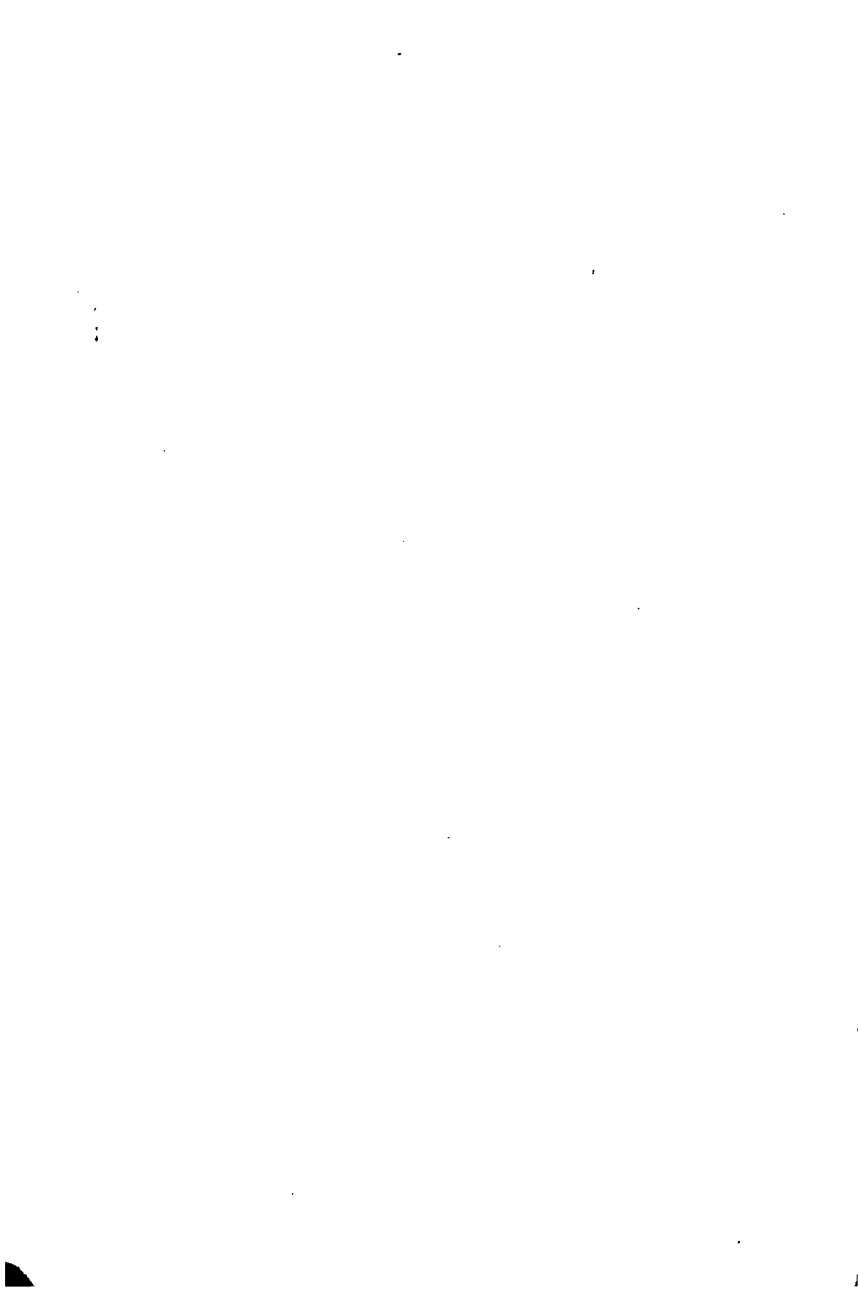
"And four or five of them said to me after you called me out to help: 'This isn't the last time we'll be in, Miss Lorelei,' said they."

"It was good advertising, whatever," spoke Sandy; and then, manfully: "It's to you that I owe it, Annie, and I'm likely to owe you a lot more than

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I can ever pay, Annie dear. And now—darling—if you'll give me a kiss, that will be another thing I'll owe you. But I see my way plain to paying that back, Annie."

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A PLAY TO THE GALLERY

THE girl sat back in the saddle lazily and held the reins loose in her right hand, while the nervous brown beast under her fidgeted and walked about beneath the trees, and stopped to paw at the sod with a delicate hoof. The rest were having lemonades and other things over by the Country Club piazza, but she had refused. She wanted to get on, to ride hard, to jump a fence or two, and have a sensation of excitement, of danger, that would dull, if only for a second, the restlessness and choked feeling that held her. Besides, lemonades made one ride badly. It was foolish to drink them on a ride—still more the other things. She looked across, a touch scornfully, at the gay group by the wide piazza, the figures shifting in and out as the horses moved here and there. Very picturesque they looked, as horseback people always do—the men mostly standing by their mounts, in their high russet or black boots and

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baggy, sporty-looking trousers; the women, more or less uniform in dark habits and white stocks, bending from their saddles to take the frosty glasses, and making cheerful little jokes as the quick-moving animals spilled a drop on coat or cavalier. A very pretty picture indeed—but that was all. Twelve of them there were, and not one whom she cared a turn of her hand ever to see again. There was so little in the world that made any real difference. Except Annie, of course, her little sister—she looked at the slim figure on the gray mare—Annie was more her property than anything on earth. But the girl herself counted too much to be left to her reflections many minutes. Two figures dashed across the bit of lawn, tinkling glasses in their hands.

“If you will be so exclusive—” began the foremost, and stumbled as he said it, splashing yellow waves of light out of the glass. “Jove!” he finished, and stared sadly at his spattered trousers.

“That’s what you get for being intemperate,” said the other triumphantly, as he brought up with an unspilled goblet by the side of the brown horse. “Here, my Lady Disdain—here’s your nice, whole-

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some, plain lemonade, good for man and beast," and he held it up.

"I'm neither." The girl on the horse shook her head. "Give it to Crackerjack." She patted the brown neck.

"There, then—who's turned down now?" demanded the spilled-drink hero. "You must know, my lady, that Jimmie and I had a bet as to what you'd take, and he went in for non-intoxicants; but I, on the theory that you were not like other girls, and full of spirit by nature, made so bold as to bring you something with a touch of spirits in it. Take it—there, do! It'll do you good. There's a long ride before us."

The girl, with a pleading cavalier on either side, looked from one to the other, and patted her horse again.

"Don't want either, thank you. Mr. Lyndon, you're very saucy to bring it. You must have had one before you dared. Take it back. No"—she put out her hand impulsively—"give it to me."

The group by the piazza were watching to see what she would do as she lifted the glass, and with

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a smile and a quick outward curve of pale gold the doomed drink scattered over the grass. There was clapping of hands and laughter from the step, and the girl laughed back, and Crackerjack turned uneasily. Then, under cover of the hilarity, she bent to Lyndon, standing a bit stiff and dignified.

"It was horrid of me," she said. "I knew they would laugh, and I wanted them to, but it was nasty to you. You deserved it, for you knew I wasn't that kind—but it was just as horrid of me. It was a play to the gallery, and I'm ashamed. Come and ride with me, and I'll make up."

Two minutes more and a dozen riders and horses were streaming down the road, the prettiest sight in the world. Crackerjack led with his fast, effortless walk, and Lyndon by his side trotted his lean bay hunter to keep abreast of the alert, spirited brown head. Alert, and spirited, too, in the saddle, the girl tried hard to keep her word and "make up." With quick response and earnest questioning and ready sympathy she kept the man in play on the subject that interests every man—himself; and meantime

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prodded her spirit, that would not care, however hard she tried, for a single word he said. "He is so thoughtful and kind—yes, and bright and clever, too," she told her flagging spirit, reproachfully. And the spirit answered, unimpressed: "Yes, and self-centred and uninteresting!" So the argument was not of much use. And like a pang of physical sickness came over her the memory of another man who had ridden this road by her side. Lyndon talked incessantly, and talked well, and the other had been silent sometimes for miles. Yet to-day the landscape ached with emptiness, while the last time—she remembered they walked the horses through this lane then, too, and the brown earth rose up and sang beneath their feet. And through the memory Lyndon's satisfied voice rolled smoothly.

On a wave of impatience came the decision that she would not work over this man any longer. She had been rude to him for a minute—well, she had been civil for fifteen. It was enough. A quick pull at Crackerjack's light mouth brought him, snorting, to a standstill, and off she slipped. Lyn-

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don, reining in more slowly, looked back in astonishment.

"What's wrong? Let me—" his leg slid over to dismount, but she stopped him.

"No, stay on—don't get down. I don't want you—truly I don't. It's just—" she laughed. "I don't know how to explain and be polite."

Lyndon was standing by his horse now, facing her, perplexity all over his fresh, good-looking face. The others were coming up.

"What is it? Any accident?" they called, and the girl turned and addressed the bunch, half laughing, half irritated.

"Can't I be unreasonable without stirring up everybody? I want to stop and camp out—and I'm going to. You all go on."

"I'll camp, too, with pleasure," said Lyndon, with the kindly indulgence of a man determined to be a gentleman always, no matter what vagaries of woman may try him.

"And I will, too!" "Send off those chaps and let me!" broke in other voices from the saddles above her.

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"Oh, *no!*" The girl grew impatient. "I won't have you—I don't want you. I don't want to break up the ride. I'm just going to stop here and think over my sins, and plan some more. I know it's foolish, but I wish to be foolish. I won't have any one wait with me—I simply won't."

Of course, there was nothing for it but, with many protests, to give the girl her way. She had stopped on top of a high hill that sloped down to a rushing little river. Somebody spoke of the bridge—its safety had been questioned.

"Is the bridge all right?" Lyndon asked Jimmie Saintsbury. This part of the world all belonged to the Saintsburys.

"Father said this morning at breakfast that it was probably good for six months unless they begin to mend it. They start in by taking out the stringers or something underneath, so it will be out of commission at once then till it's all made over. They were to begin to-day, but there's nobody there, you see, so we're safe enough."

The girl leaned against the fence, with her arm through Crackerjack's bridle.

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"Please everybody get killed before Annie," she said, and tickled the horse's head with the handle of her crop. "And please go on—you disturb my thinking."

"We'll go down over the bridge out to Everett, and back by the Blue Island road, and stop here for you, if you're still thinking," said Lyndon. "Seems to me you're mighty foolish not to let me think with you," he added tentatively.

She stood with a hand on the horse's bent neck—Crackerjack was browsing busily—and watched them dash across the bit of level road and then slow up as they started down the long, steep hill: the bay and black and gray and brown horses, their sensitive ears twitching backward and forward, their clean-cut legs moving carefully, daintily, along the stony road.

Is there anything so good as to be on a good horse, with good roads and an afternoon before one? That there is "something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man" applies mentally as well as physically. There is no room in the saddle for Black Care, and if he indeed mounts

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behind the horseman, he is likely to fall off within the first mile. There is no better way to loosen his grip. Riders say that the animal feels his master's mood and personality through the touch of the reins and pressure of the body. As often, surely, the free, large nature of a horse flows back into the rider, and the world is for a human being in the saddle a kindlier, simpler, less complex affair than it is anywhere else. Yet the girl gave a sigh of relief as the chorus of hoofs clattered in distant thunder across the bridge and the last galloping figure disappeared over the top of the hill beyond.

"We couldn't stand them to-day, could we, Crackerjack? We're too lonely to have people about to-day, aren't we, beast?"

She twitched at the rein, and the horse raised a gentle, friendly face, gazed at her a moment from wondering, calm eyes, and, lowering his head, set about munching grass industriously again.

"Crackerjack, you're such a help. Nobody but you knows enough not to talk," she said aloud, and then moodily fell to thinking.

Mental battles need no wide scene for their

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field of action. Here in this narrow lane, her back against the silvery old wood of a farm fence, and the sappy June grass deep about her, the girl was drawing out her lines for the greatest fight that had come into her life. For two months, while the outer flow of her days had been even and usual, her inner life had grown daily more unbearable.

"So now, if I have any self-respect and any will, I shall straighten this thing out, and make up my mind what to think, and think it, and live my own life—hard. And not whine."

Her face set into a look that promised a bad quarter-hour for the half of herself that wanted to whine. With a firm hand on the emotional side, she began to review the course of true love that had not run smooth. It was much like other love-affairs, with two great points of difference. It was her own—that puts a love-affair into a class by itself. And it had stopped as if a stream in flood had run dry. And the girl did not know why—there lay the sting and the humiliation. A year ago he had come, in June, and on a day like this they had taken their first ride. Horseback had made them comrades at

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once, but it was a long time before the girl had felt anything more than friendship in the delight of being with him. Then by imperceptible, rapid slips it had moved on, and on, till the pleasant, irresponsible, light-hearted good-fellowship hung swaying, unbroken, yet with a thrill of danger in its poise, on the edge of a precipice at whose foot rushed the deep water, the happiness and misery of love.

One night, when they were left alone in the cool darkness and quiet of the Country Club piazza, had come the landslide. A dozen empty chairs stood about them as she leaned her arms on the railing in the far dark corner. A track of yellow light streaming from the open door a hundred feet away blackened the shadows, and, inside, cards slipped and shuffled delicately. Every one had gone back to town but these four, and the two players were absorbed; the girl and her lover were as much alone as in the heart of a wood. She went over and over the words he had said—very much what other men have said to other girls always, yet with no danger of monotony. And at the end she had felt his hands

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on each side of her face, holding it, and his mouth had touched her hair.

"That isn't so very wicked," he had said, and afterward she wondered what he meant. Why was it wicked at all? Two huge eyes of light swept up the dark road from the garage, and they had all climbed into the car, and she remembered sitting there, dazed and quiet, knowing only that he sat next to her through the short four miles to town, but with hardly a word to say, as silent, as stirred as herself. There could be no mistake about that; no one could pretend feeling so strong; no one could be an actor so perfectly. And as she thought of it she rejected such a doubt with scorn. However things were afterward, he had been sincere, he had cared for her that night. Three days had gone after that, with no sign from him, and though puzzled she had not a gleam of distrust, and the memory of his voice and touch in the dark seemed almost enough. When she woke in the morning the flooding happiness of it met her, and when she went to sleep at night it floated her out on a shining sea of dreams. She could wait. And she waited for three

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days, saying to herself that his ways were not like other men's, that she would understand in a minute when he came, and that the king not only could but would do no wrong. And on the fourth day came a formal note of good-by. He was going away to live. He had hoped to be able to see her and tell her about it before he changed cities, a month from now, but most unexpectedly he was leaving for the West in the evening on a hunting-trip that would fill all the time between. He hoped that their paths might cross again some day, and in the meantime he could not thank her in words for the months past, but he would thank her always in thought, and would never forget them. That was all.

"Oh!" moaned the girl aloud, and threw her arms sideways in the grass and her face on them as she felt again the ache and the stab of reading his letter. Yet—she could not tell if she fancied it, but somewhere in those correct words she thought she could catch a note of the ache and the stab they had brought to her. What did it mean? That was what she had set herself to-day to decide. With a clear brain she separated the *pros* and *cons* like a

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lawyer, and found three possible theories as the result. First there was the chance that he had been amusing himself at her expense—she put that in its pigeonhole. Then there was the chance that he had been carried away for the moment, and, touched perhaps by feeling that she might have shown for him, had said more than he meant and regretted it afterward. She shivered as she pigeonholed that theory. Then—and this she liked best to think—there might be some obstacle, some reason why he could not go farther, should not perhaps have gone so far. It might be any of a dozen possibilities; it might be another girl whom he had been bound to before he met her. He had come from so far away that no one here knew his people or his friends, and though he had told her more than any one, he was reticent, and it was evidently hard for him to talk about himself.

“So there are three theories,” the girl said aloud. “Now, I’ll decide which one I’ll believe,” and she turned at the sound of hammering and stared over the hill. There were four men, down below, at work on the bridge. She started as she thought of what

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Jimmie Saintsbury had said, and then remembered that the riders were to come by the other road, crossing the stream miles away at a new and safe bridge.

Crackerjack had eaten all the grass within his tether, and was pulling toward pastures new, so she threw the bridle over her arm and walked to the brow of the hill. She pushed away the daisies that gleamed white against the shaded grays of the old fence, and sitting down, threw her gloves and her sailor hat beside her, and the breeze blew her blond hair about her face. Three theories, and the first was that he had been playing with her all the time—it took her half a minute to discard that idea. The straight, sincere look of his eyes, the thousand and one acts of simple friendship that had filled those months, rose up to reproach her. No; that theory was impossible. Then could it be that she had mistaken friendship for love, and that he had seen the mistake and been touched to a warmer feeling from pure sympathy? Had he pitied her? The thought was unendurable. Yet there were such depths of gentleness and kindness in him, and they had been

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such friends—it might be that he could not bear to see her care for him without response. He might have tried to care for her in return, and have failed, and so left her as he did as the kindest way out of it. The girl's hair, yellow as corn, blew about her eyes in the June breeze, and she pushed it aside, as if she must see clearly. There was the third theory. It seemed to-day that it would be utter happiness if she might believe that he cared as she did, and had gone away only because he must. If she only knew! She balanced the two possibilities in her mind over and over, this way and that. Surely the look in his eyes, the tone in his voice, the touch of his hands on her face, never came from an effort of duty; surely there was a quality in them not to be mistaken, that meant the greatest and the simplest feeling—love.

A peasant woman would not have hesitated; but as the keenness of sense, the exquisite sight and hearing, that belong to a savage are lost somewhere in the refining process of the ages between him and his twentieth-century descendant, so this woman, who was the high-water mark of civiliza-

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tion, had dulled in training the woman's sure instinct. The bias of a practised mind to refuse mere feeling as a reason, and a certain Spartan vein of courage that impelled her to choose the harder of two roads—these decided her. With a wrench at her soul she cast away the happier possibility, and was adjusting her life sternly, with trembling, determined hands, to the bitter belief of the other. He had pitied her; he had loved her only for a moment, only because he was good and strong, and was sorry. But to the generous, torn soul there was a word of comfort in that. He *was* strong and good—it would always be sacred to him, this unasked love of hers; she might always remember him as she wished, as the truest of gentlemen; she need never be ashamed that she had put him first in her world. He had done the one right and brave thing, and done it, with the quick resolution she had learned to expect of him, instantly. It was hard and cruel, but it was best, and there was a pleasure, knowing it was his way, in the pain of it.

From the far-away city, whose steeples and towers rose like clouds against the sunset, beyond the dis-

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tant silver river, chimed out, softened by the miles between, the bells and whistles of six o'clock. Up the hill in the low sunlight, dark against the brightening sky, toiled two work-worn figures; and Crackerjack, raising his gentle, high-bred head from his long feast, gazed at them mildly. The girl nodded brightly.

"How do you do, Peter? I didn't know it was you hammering down there at the bridge. How do you do, Thomas?" Half the farmers in the country were her friends.

The men grinned with pleased faces, and asked if anything was wrong—if they could help her on her horse. But she shook her head. No; Crackerjack would let her mount without trouble; they were old friends, she and Crackerjack. And the men, with a pat on the horse's shining neck, trudged along. But fifty feet away they stopped and turned.

"You ben't a-goin' to ride back over that bridge, be ye?" called the elder. "Because we've took out one of the stringers, that was rotted, and a dog couldn't go over it safe. Land! I 'most forgot to tell ye."

"No," said the girl, "I'm not going that way.

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But surely you've left it guarded in some way, haven't you?"

The men looked at each other guiltily, and were silent for a moment. The elder said sheepishly:

"We shouldn't orter leave it even for a spell—I know that. But I done forgot the red lantern I had all fixed at my house, and we was both in a hurry to get home to-night, and nobody 'don't never come by here after six o'clock—never. So we let it go till after supper, and I cal'lated to send down little Pete with the lantern soon's he'd et his supper. I'll send him prompt, miss, I promise ye."

They were gone; and the girl, with a momentary thought that she was glad the party had planned to come by the other road, went back to the rearrangement of her life. Love was gone out of it, and, for the present, joy. But the girl knew that she could not be unhappy always, that it was of the essential part of herself to fight her way through clouds to sunshine as a diver pushes down the water to get back to the air that he must breathe or die. Life was full of good things, and only a coward would give up the battle because he might not win the

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best thing. She had still her work—the girl painted so well that people who knew foretold a future for her; she had still the brightness of other lives close to her own to consider; she had still the out of doors that she had loved always—horseback and golf, wide, free horizons, dew-fresh mornings, long, sunny afternoons, streaming sunsets and purple twilights that such things mean. Life was full. While it might be made unselfish and brave and bright, it would be a pity, it would be a shame to her birth-right of courage, if she should fail to live it with her might. The music might be silent in the march, but she could still walk with a swing, her feet timed to the memory of gay notes. And she would. The girl was not a coward, and as she faced, there by the road-side, years to come that seemed to her all colorless and up-hill, with a resolution not merely of endurance, but of heart and action, it was a good courage and a strong will that brought so glowing a promise from such burning ashes.

“But if I only knew!” she whispered. With a long, trembling breath she rose and stood leaning against Crackerjack, and stared, as if at a new,

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hard, yet beautiful world, across the fields, where the long shadows lay in cool, uneven masses; back up the brown country road, where the grass grew thick in the middle—thick over the prints of his horse's feet, made two months ago; and then down the hill to the rippling river and the treacherous bridge, lying shadowy in the hollow, and up the slope beyond, across whose crest the red and yellow sunset lay gorgeously dying into amethyst and rose.

"If I only knew!" she said again aloud.

There was a dark blotch against the melted gold of the sky. The girl stood upright suddenly and gazed, her eyes wide. It moved; another had joined it; and another—half a dozen more. With quick, steady hands she caught the trailing bridle and threw it over Crackerjack's neck, and drew him to a little rise of the ground by the roadside. But the horse, fresh with his long rest, jumped mischievously aside as she put out her foot to the stirrup.

"Crackerjack, let me mount!" she pleaded aloud. "Oh, dear Crackerjack, don't you see they are coming back by the bridge, the broken bridge? Be still, horse. We have to save them."

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The dark, dashing figures were well down the opposite slope, putting yards behind them with dreadful steadiness, before the skittish beast, unconscious of the desperate peril his skittishness meant, let her get near enough to spring to the saddle. It was only a minute and a half, but it seemed an hour. Then off she went recklessly down the rough road, and as she raced she called and waved her crop.

"Back! Back!" she called. "The bridge! The bridge!"

But the clatter of the many hoofs together, the noise and laughter as the riders shouted one to another, drowned her voice. They saw her now, and waved their crops at her, flying madly toward them, and more than one wondered a bit at her careless riding, but they did not catch any of the eager words on which death and life were hanging. Suddenly, as she rode, it came to her with a sick shock that she could not save them. They would not listen, would not be warned—it was useless. They would dash on the broken bridge, all together, and be drowned—it was too horrible! And then, in



"Back! Back!" she called. "The bridge! The bridge!"



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a quick, heroic flash, she saw the way. If she got there first and rode on the bridge, they would see her fall, they would have time to stop. The bravest cannot face death at a turn of the hand without a great heart-throb. This girl was of the bravest, and she felt her pulses bound and stop for a second of time, then she looked deliberately across the valley at the bunch of riders, as Crackerjack's long, sweeping stride carried her every second nearer them. Annie was the only one she cared an atom for, and Annie was back on top of the hill—she could see the gray horse and the slim figure. Annie was safe in any case. It was her life for lives that meant nothing to her—and she suddenly laughed aloud.

"Am I a coward? Is there a question?" she asked, in proud self-scorn. And then words that she had read flashed across her brain: "There is no better thing to do with a life than to give it away." And then: "It is easier to die than to live. They will think me a heroine, when I don't mind—I hardly mind at all. It's just another play to the gallery." And then again, for the last time, the sob wrung from her heart—"If I only knew!"

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Across the river the horses clattered merrily on, and they were still talking and laughing.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Lyndon. "Wait! There's something wrong; she's calling to us."

But the others did not hear, and he dashed along with them, and the race for death was begun in earnest. On the other side of the bridge the girl rode harder, pell-mell, down-hill. She struck the astonished Crackerjack with her crop—Crackerjack, who never needed more than her voice.

"I must get there at least thirty feet ahead, or they can't pull up," she said, and the pure excitement of the race caught her.

On she came, a flashing vision of intense life, and as Lyndon's hunter forged ahead to meet her, Crackerjack gathered himself for the spring on the bridge, the girl waved her crop triumphantly, and the bright picture—the splendid horse with his kindly, eager face, the girl with her fair hair blowing, her cheeks glowing, her eyes shining with victory, and the crop still lifted high in air—crashed through the bridge.

That night at twelve o'clock three men sat about

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a table in a corner of the big red room, luxurious with its deep warmth of crimson color, its heavy gilded rafters, of their club in New York. Two of them were commonplace enough; well-bred, well-dressed, low-voiced, the outer edges of their personalities smoothed into the pleasant if monotonous uniformity that results from the steady friction of great cities. The third would have been conspicuous anywhere for the beauty of his head and his strong and well-knit body, and for a quality of charm that shone from him the moment he spoke. He spoke little, as it happened, but it was as if fire smouldered behind the dark impassiveness of his eyes, and he was visibly the centre of the group. A high, thin glass stood before him, frosted, pale gold, light-shot, bubble-flecked. He shook it gently and tinkled the bits of ice within, then kept his hand about it as if the coolness were grateful.

To this table, down the length of the room, came winding rapidly through the tangle of other tables a fourth man, with an excited, earnest face. The man watched him as he came, and when he met his eye a smile of such radiance broke over his

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face that it seemed that the boy-angel who had shipped on the bark of his life some thirty odd years before must be yet a passenger. It was easy to see, as he smiled up at his friend, why men and women loved him. The newcomer put a hand on his shoulder, but spoke to them all.

"I've just heard the most dreadful thing," he said. "Most horrible accident. I was dining at the Leavitts', and they had a telegram—cousins, you know. And immediately after, Lyndon, who was in the riding party, came in, pale as a ghost. He had run down on the train for the family. Jove! I didn't know there was such heroism to be found." He turned suddenly to the man on whose shoulder his hand still rested. "Jack, you must know them all," he said. "You knew the girl—I've heard you speak of her."

"What are you talking about?" asked the man bluntly, his sombre eyes facing his friend with a bewildered, startled look. And the others stared, silent.

A few words told it; they must needs be swift, dramatic; it had all been so quick that there was

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little to tell. And nothing to do now for the girl, who lay quiet, with the decisions of life lifted from her. It was simple—one minute had settled everything. Perhaps had even answered that cry—"If I only knew!"

The men listened breathlessly, and when the story was finished, spoke with quick exclamations or questions, after their characters. But the man with the glass did not take his eyes from his friend's face for a long half-minute after the story was told. It was as if they had been petrified, glazed. Then his hand that held the glass loosened about it, he pushed the untouched shimmer of crystal and gold from him; he rose slowly and pushed his chair aside, and unhurriedly, but without a word or a look, walked down the long room and out through the doorway.



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WHEN the road of life turns sharply right or left, according to a decision; when the decision must be ready of a Monday morning, and this is Saturday; when one has five times gone down into soul-depths to consider, and five times been jerked back by a rap or a ring, and banality—when this is the state of affairs, the state of mind is rasped. One bitterly resents the fate that has led to a Paris hotel, and a numbered door, and a telephone.

The girl Alixe, struggling for calm and concentration, was aware that she was listening all the time to sounds in the corridors. Yet her thoughts ran at length into a quieter, remoter groove; they slipped across the ocean to her own America, to country roads where earth was brown and hillsides misty with a springtime gone by, where she rode a horse through fresh weather, through woods starred with white trilliums; and riding beside her was the Only Man in the World—the man who would never for-

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give her. By the pang that came as she remembered those rides, she knew that, whether he forgave her or not, she cared for him still. But the girl was not of the Griselda pattern—not meek. She had humbled herself, had gone all the way. It had been her fault; she had been unpardonable: yet, she was worth pardoning.

There the man had failed her. He had not seen, through the things she did, which were unworthy, the thing that she was, which was worth while. She had taken her pride—her very stiff pride—in her hand, and said that she was sorry; had tried to show him that it was not the regular travelling of a small nature, but the running off the track of a warm and generous one. And the man would not see. By that she knew that he was limited and vain. Yes, but he was other things—himself, above all. It is hard to resolve personality entirely into qualities; it holds, often, when qualities go to pieces.

The girl made for the man the allowances he would not make for her. She knew about wounded vanity, and she knew how self-distrust develops wounded vanity. She added up columns for and against, and

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reckoned that limitation and vanity did not count against the large things set to his credit; when she had added and subtracted over and over, the result was still altogether desirable.

This arithmetic did not occur immediately after the quarrel, which was two years before. At that time she had merely floundered and said, in many forms, the wrong thing. So that the man was more fixed in a pig-headed, iron-bound, steel-clamped obstinacy never to forgive her. He let her alone violently, counting it unto himself for righteousness and a firm character; and she suffered and grew—very gradually grew—strong. And now she could add up the debit and credit, and think of him, no more as a demigod whose smile or frown made the weather, but as a headstrong, warm-hearted, clever, stupid boy-man, who, though he would never forgive her, yet somehow, with his big brain and body and heart tied to much childishness, continued to be the high-water mark of desirableness.

Yet—he would never forgive her.

And the prince insisted that she should marry him. An eligible prince, with a family tree and castles—

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a fortune, moreover. The background was satisfying. The girl liked it. Most normal girls have no objection to princes and glitter and glow, as princes and glitter and glow. It would be amusing to be a princess; she would like the title—and, moreover, she liked the prince. He was not a great man, but he was quick-witted and lovable. It proved him to be different from the ruck of princes that he was mad about her, for the girl was not an heiress. She had explained this carefully, and he had laughed, with his flashing eyes spilling over two or three meanings—impulsive, adoring, mirthful; he certainly was Prince Charming, besides his other long names.

“But, mademoiselle—one sees I have thirty cents, as you says it. I don’t care if you are rich or not, if you are yourself. Me—I have money like gee-whiz.” (The prince desired to speak English colloquially.)

So there the case stood. On one side, the Only Man in the World lost to sight, to memory dear—and a lifelong spinsterhood; on the other side, gay and brilliant years beckoning to a light-footed couple resembling herself and that dear boy, the

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prince. This was the problem, and she had set this morning apart to answer it, and had shut herself up in her room at the Hotel Normandie for the purpose. For on Monday morning she had promised that she would give the prince, who, for an impatient and spoiled lad, had been patient, his answer. And, every two minutes since she had locked her door, had come a knock at it, or a ring at the telephone, with commonplace to follow. Each small interruption left her less able to focus her mind on the one big thing in life; until, finally, on her reverie of old rides broke the sixth rap.

"*Entrez,*" the girl said, quietly enough—so little, fortunately, do the tones of the well-bred express their feelings; and the husky French chambermaid man deposited a box on the table—the adorable pink hat from the Rue de la Paix. "*Merci,*" she said, and the black-mustached gentleman was gone. But in his place, stood Elsie—her young sister, sixteen, full of romance, thrilled with the big sister's love-affairs.

"They've done nothing but pound at your door, Alixe, all this morning. I tried to stop them, but mother had me clutched, running ribbons, and every

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time I was too late. It's a crime. It's no use trying to get a quiet moment in this bedlam of a hotel. But I have an idea—I know how you can skip the pandemonium and get a chance to think in peace. You trust your Aunt Elsie."

Alixé sighed. "There's no peace to be got in a large family. I'll have to toss up a penny in the end—I know I will," she said.

"No, you won't—I'll see to that. I know how to manage," Elsie assured her.

"How?"

"Listen. To-morrow is Sunday, and the fountains play at Versailles. The McMillans are going to motor out, and we'll go with them—you and I. Then, when we get there, we'll lose them. They won't care; they'll be glad. They're always grateful for being left alone. We'll come back by train. And you and I will wander over to the Petit Trianon Park, to the *hameau*. It's always deserted when the fountains are playing, and it's a perfect place to think out a love problem. Oh, I don't mean to be fresh. It's a horrid hole you're in. I wouldn't have your responsibility for a thousand dollars a minute.

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Hideous! The prince is a dear, and that would be easy and satisfactory, and mother is frantic for fear you won't. But, then—Jim Arnold. Suppose you met him after, and saw that he liked you still, and it was too late. Awful! And the prince isn't a patch on Jim Arnold—really and truly. Yet he *is* a dear, and mother would die of joy. It's heart-breaking! I do understand, Alixe."

"You do—you're a comfort."

But she knew that nobody understood. Elsie was her lifelong friend, and Elsie knew as much as any separate human being might. But no separate human being might know the most real part of it. Nobody could help her. She must fight it out alone—which is always the case, when a fight matters.

However, Elsie's idea of the scene for the drama appealed to her. The little hamlet, the plaything of Marie Antoinette, set, with its thatched roofs and simplicity, into the royal park; the twilight of trees which folded about it; the whispers of wind always there, which seemed like the ghosts of voices; the memories of lords and ladies raking hay and making

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butter with awkward jewelled hands; more than all, the thought of the girl queen who tried so hard, though a queen, to be happy as a woman—all this shadowy old romance filled the place with fascination for the girl from a new, unshadowed country. Elsie's plan was good; they would do that.

The McMillans' car fled through Paris, from Paris over the eleven miles to Versailles. The little bride and groom laughed at everything and at nothing; and Alixe and Elsie laughed with them, as if they were not conspirators. And almost at once they were walking about in the crowd down the lanes of clipped growth that led to the Neptune Fountain. Marble statues gleamed high against the walls of the hedges; vistas reached to fairy lakes, to dim, formal avenues which melted in shadows. Looking this way and that down the dark *allées*, one saw at the farther end the white shaft of a fountain rising in mist and in brilliancy.

The girl's imagination ran away with her. Her mind was of the kind poised lightly between material and immaterial things. The loveliness of Versailles, with its memories and its ghosts, its tragedies

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and comedies and gayeties, seized her. She seemed to feel another atmosphere, to see other beings than those who talked to her and jostled her. There was a presence—to the mind of the girl—in an enormous wig, with sword at the side, in glory of blue satin and scent and laces, a presence which strutted along the wooded lanes, followed by a gorgeous company. King Louis XIV of France—Louis the Great—walked for her that day in his gardens of Versailles.

So strong was the illusion that she found herself moving aside for the passing of that long-dead, arrogant crowd. It was gone, and out from the maze of clipped greenness seemed to ring voices. A girl in a shepherdess costume came flying, and behind the girl was the scowling face of a lady in waiting, the old Comtesse de Noailles, who angrily hobbled after; then young lords and more ladies, laughing at the queen, laughing at cross "Madame Etiquette," who could by no exercise of dignity keep in order "the Austrian," the girl Marie Antoinette.

This other girl, standing in the Queen's garden a century after that head had fallen from its slim shoulders, dreamed of the crowd of figures that had

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walked the history-haunted lanes, until the past was almost reality. She started at her sister's touch.

"They're lost," Elsie said. "Bully! I didn't think I could do it so fast. Now, scoot; let's be away from here before they're struck conscientious and look us up."

The two found their way through crowds of milliners and barbers, away from the huge Bassin de Neptune, through the gardens past the Bassin d'Apollon, and then, from the pile of palaces, into quiet paths, past the Grand Trianon, past the Petit Trianon standing in Greek haughtiness of simplicity; and with that they were in the stillness of the park, and surrounded by the twelve buildings of the *hameau*, the play-village of Marie Antoinette.

"*Nous v'là!*" Elsie announced. "I told you! Not a human! You can think your head off. I'm going for a wander by myself—I've been dying to prowl about this place without mamma, and this is my chance, so good-by for an hour." She turned her wrist to look at the watch strapped to it. "For an hour and a half, Alixe. There's a train then. I'll come for you, and meantime you can have it out with yourself. Isn't it quiet?"

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"It's heaven," Alixe agreed. "Don't go far—you won't get into mischief, child?"

"No—oh, no!" And Elsie's character was such that the older sister took her word for it.

There is a grassy slope in the shadow of the trees, near the tiny lake, where, reflected in the water, one sees the thatched roofs and balconies of the house of the "farmer"—the farmer whom the guillotine killed, who was Louis XVI of France. Alixe leaned her head against a tree and forgot herself and her own affairs, and like the waves of a quiet river the memories of the place rippled over her. Over there in the little mill the King had played miller and shouldered sacks of corn; the stone steps to the "boudoir" were mossy now, where once the feet of the Austrian had run up and down; down a pathway the door of the Queen's theatre still peeped from the trees; "Malbrough's Tower" frowned still in toy grimness above the dairy-house. Alixe almost believed she heard a voice singing out of the quiet. It was the nurse, who sang to the Queen's children:

"Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre,
Sa dame à sa tour monte."

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The nurse sang the old rhyme, and the children sang it after her in baby French; and their mother, the Queen, named this tiny tower, to please them, "Malbrough's Tower." The traditions that Alixe had read of the place crowded to her mind.

In the centre of all was the humble "Maison du Seigneur"—the house of the farmer. On that balcony the Queen had come out in her white lawn gown of a farmer's wife, and the King, a Watteau peasant in dress, had followed her, laughing; and the two had called to the milkmaids going in and out of the door of the dairy—a dairy with marble benches, with pails of Sèvres china—milkmaids who were duchesses and princesses.

There was to Alixe a charm in the thought of the milkmaids, because one of them had been her own ancestress, Alixe de Courtailles, a favorite of the Queen. Afterward, in the Terror, she had fled to America, and through five generations her name had been kept and was to-day the name of the foreigner who came back to sit among the ghosts of the Queen's village.

Alixé de Courtailles ! The Alixe of America fell to

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wondering what her kinswoman had looked like. She imagined she caught a glimpse, through the open door of the dairy, of a young face, blue-eyed and alert and winning. It was easy to animate the place with those figures, long dust—stately heads whose rest had at last been the guillotine, satin-shod feet which had fled through blood, laughing eyes which had wept the loss of everything that meant happiness.

A breeze rustled in the chestnuts above the girl's head, touched the quiet lake, and lifted the leaves of the bushes as if a hand brushed them this way and that. It was gone; yet there was still a whisper of it, like voices, far down the path that led through the wood. Like voices? There *were* voices. Alixe turned and looked down the path. People! Through the light and shadow came a flash of white; there were women. A laugh broke distinctly, and then, nearer, a soft chorus of voices.

At once Alixe was back in the present, troubled and irritated. What a nuisance! She had come so far to be alone, and here were French shop people spoiling her solitude. The group, floating toward

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her with a murmur of talking, all at once seemed to be aware of her, and movement and sound stopped. Alixe realized suddenly that the voices which had become silent were not the sharp tones of shop people, but low and trained, and that the dozen people standing, half in the shadow of the trees, half in the blurred sunlight, regarding her, carried themselves with dignity and pride.

A wave of apologetic shyness seized her, as if she might be the intruder, not they. Then, with surprise, she caught the gleam of pink and of blue satin, of laces, of powdered hair and feathers. The next second her attention was fixed on a young woman who stepped from the company, dressed in white. A straw hat was on the curls that lay loosely on her shoulders. It was the plainest of costumes, except—the girl's eyes opened as they marked the exception—a string of magnificent rubies lay around her neck, like drops of blood linked closely; there was an aggressive brilliance in them. The young woman spoke, with gentleness, with charm.

"I fear that we have disturbed mademoiselle," she said. "I am desolated."

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Alixé stood before the Frenchwoman with that odd impression of a trespasser on private property. "Oh, no; surely—it is I—" she stammered. And then she regained composure. "It is you to whom the park belongs, madame—to the French," she said, smiling her response to the friendly face. "I am only a stranger from America."

"From America!" the newcomer repeated the words. She turned a trifle toward the figures grouped behind her—a mere trifle, as if she knew that a movement of hers would be noted. "I have a wish to talk to mademoiselle," she said gently over her shoulder. "I wish to talk to mademoiselle alone."

It seemed to Alixé as if the bunch of bright colors on the edge of the wood melted into the russet, blue, and black-green shadows. She was sitting again on the slope of the grass, and the strange lady sat by her, and they talked like old friends. It was curious how easy it was to talk to her. The girl told her, smiling, of her dreams; how she had imagined King Louis XVI and the Queen and their friends at play in this park.

"I love to come here," she said. "It makes that

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bit of history vivid—most of all, the Queen. The place is full of her, and everybody loves Marie Antoinette, you know. In all history there isn't any figure, I think, that has better kept its reality and the affection of the world. Because she was so human—that is why human beings love her still. She stood the test like a Queen and a heroine—yet she was normal and womanly. It makes you feel as if every human woman might possibly have heroism, if the need came." She looked about at the quiet little old buildings among the trees. "Yes, indeed, people love Marie Antoinette after a hundred years. I think after a thousand they will love her the same."

Alix's gaze came back to her new friend's face, and she saw with astonishment that the Frenchwoman's blue eyes were full of tears.

"Is it the truth?" the stranger asked, with a slight break across the words. "It would be pleasant to Marie Antoinette of France to know that. She cared most for that—for love—far more than for greatness. She would have been glad to have lived—to have died, even, I believe—if she might know what mademoiselle has told me."

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The girl was surprised at the emphasis which the newcomer appeared to lay on her words; yet she considered the emotional French nature, and it came to her that this charming person was taking her as a representative of her nation, of America; for that reason her words carried weight. She went on—it was odd how the stranger seemed to draw out her intimate thoughts.

“I am proud to have a little link with the Queen—if I may call it as much as that. In any case, I feel through four generations a little right of loyalty to her; for, you see, madame, my great-great-grandmother was one of her ladies. And the Queen cared for her. Her name was——”

“Alixé de Courtaillés.”

The low voice took the words from the girl's lips before they were spoken. Alixé gazed with eyes wide open. She was aware of a slight thrill creeping through her, as of something unprecedented. She looked into the face of the Frenchwoman, and she saw the rubies around the throat gleam as if alive. She could not speak. But the other spoke at once, easily, reassuringly:

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"It astonishes you, mademoiselle, that I know this name? Ah, but there are so many ways of knowing things, and spirit speaks to spirit so distinctly, when they are kin. And the world holds much besides the machinery that seems to make its life. You and I, mademoiselle, we are strangers, is it not? And yet we are of a closeness—I recognized it so, mademoiselle, at your first word. I could tell you other things of yourself, if I might—for example, it is very plain to me that you are troubled, perplexed over a question—that you have, it may be, a decision to make. Is it not true, mademoiselle?"

Alix, gazing into the clear eyes, felt no desire to cover any secret from them. "It is true," she said simply and waited.

"One comes, at times, to a fork in life's road, when one has to choose most definitely the way," the rippling tones went on, in exquisite crisp French which yet had, to the girl's ear, a touch of something foreign, something uncommon. The voice went on: "One must choose. Perhaps a road is gilded—it leads to greatness and riches. It dazzles, it lures. They are good things to look at, greatness

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and riches. Yet, mademoiselle, I tell you—I who have known—that it is not a reason to decide one's life, to be great, to be rich. When one is too great it is tiresome—*ennuyant*. It is to be tied with chains. Chains are not more comfortable to wear because of glittering. Always there are formalities. One may not speak or act naturally—hardly one may think naturally. And riches—ah!”

The delicate hand brushed aside wealth with a quick gesture.

“It is to be choked with flowers and bonbons to be very rich; and to be choked is not agreeable—is it not so, mademoiselle? When one has always new pleasures, one has no time to enjoy any pleasure; one has no time to enjoy those who are dearest—friends, family, children. All these must be neglected in the hurry from the last toy to the next. There is no simplicity, no leisure—it is so that life becomes a treadmill. Also, the joy of life goes; one loses the power to taste pleasure—tasting too much. Believe me, for I have known, it is not too happy a life, even when one is most lucky, to be great and rich.”

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The Frenchwoman's manner changed suddenly, winningly.

"Perhaps mademoiselle does not need a sermon on the dangers of the great world. It may be that mademoiselle's difficulty is of another sort. I believe, indeed, however, that mademoiselle's question is an old one—the question of a man."

Alixé's color came. But she answered, as before, with directness—the personality of this stranger seemed to compel that. "Yes," she said; "it is—of a man. How could you tell?"

The Frenchwoman laughed. "But that is easy. Mademoiselle is young and charming. When it is so there is always a question of a man. Of a truth, mademoiselle is charming enough to make it all simply a question of two men. Am I right? There are two?"

And the girl said quietly: "Yes, madame, there are two."

In the distance, beyond the screen of shrubbery, some one was singing—Elsie. Alixé turned her head to look. She did not want to be interrupted yet. Elsie was not in sight. When she turned back, the

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Frenchwoman stood before her, an ethereal white figure, the hands stretched, almost as if blessing her. As she lifted her eyes, the strange necklace flamed—one would certainly have thought that drops of blood circled the throat. For a second the two looked at each other. Then the clear voice spoke, more clearly, more slowly than before:

“Mademoiselle—must not make a decision—to-morrow morning. Mademoiselle—must wait until—the afternoon. Absolutely. *Il faut.*”

“Alix—Alix, where are you?”

The girl whirled to hush her sister. It seemed sacrilege to shout so in the very presence of—the presence of whom? She turned back swiftly—for Elsie was yet hidden—to answer her own thought. There was no one there. The girl stood staring about her, but could not catch even the gleam of a white gown down the path. Yet it was dim there, and the path twisted. And with that appeared the little sister.

“Elsie, did you see her?”

“See which?”

“The lady—in a white dress. She was here a

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second ago, when you called. How did she get away so suddenly?"

"I didn't see anything," declared Elsie. "Who was she? Didn't you know her?"

"Oh, Elsie—the most wonderful person! I—don't understand——"

Elsie picked up the thread: "What don't you understand? What's the matter with you, Alixe? You act dotty. I believe—yes, sir, I believe you went to sleep. A lady in white! Which is no use at all—but just like you. When time is worth four dollars a second, you take hunks of it for dreaming and such. You need me, asleep or awake, and that's the truth."

"Listen, Elsie." She told the story of the talk with the Frenchwoman; of the name of Alixe de Courtailles slipped into her own sentence; of the startling way in which her thoughts had been read; last of all, of the command that her decision should be postponed until Monday afternoon. What did it mean? Who was this unknown person who knew all about her? Wasn't it mysterious? The older girl, impressionable, poetical, threw herself, as often

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happens in this material world, on the untroubled sense of the commonplace other. The commonplace other was equal to the burden.

"Tommyrot," she pronounced. "In the first place, you were asleep."

"I wasn't." Alixe was firm.

"Well, then—I didn't think you were, either, only I thought I'd try that on you. Well—you say they were all in some sort of fancy dress? Now, isn't that French? They were just a bunch of actresses out for a country spree, in costume, to be *plus gai*—isn't it just too French? And you struck the leading lady."

"Oh! If you could have seen her, Elsie, you wouldn't talk like that. Anyhow, it doesn't explain what she did."

"Yes, it does. Frenchwomen, and especially people like actresses, are abnormally clever. They skin your soul, and you never suspect. I've read about it—I know." The sixteen-year-old head nodded wisely.

"You had mentioned Alixe de Courtailles——"

"But I *hadn't*."

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"You *thought* you hadn't, but somehow she got it from you—and then she sprang it on you. And the rest the same way. She extracted it all out of you, and ricocheted it around at you as brand-new. Oh, I've heard about more marvellous stunts than that. Or telepathy, you know—she may have been the queen-bee telepather. We had a lot about that in school last term, and it's a fact that they squeegee things out of people without a word said. Hypnotism, too—why, it's easy; there are a dozen ways to explain. The lovely lady was having the time of her life with you. You say yourself that you felt a powerful inclination to tell secrets—well, you did. See? And then she told them back to you. I understand—but it *was* interesting, and exactly the kind of thing to happen to a dreamy old juggins like you. She sized you up when she saw you, I'll bet."

"She did say—something—like that."

"You see," Elsie crowed. "Trust your Aunt Elsie! I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see in the paper to-morrow that 'Madame Céleste, the champion mind-reader of the Cirque d'Eté,' or something, had been giving a fête at Versailles."

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"Oh, Elsie! You are a vulgar little brat. If you could have seen her—that's all!"

But already the spell of the adventure was losing strength; already the breezy oxygen of Elsie's personality was replacing the delicate intoxication of that other presence.

"I suppose it must be something of the sort," Alixe admitted reluctantly. "There's nothing much else to think, is there? But we won't tell a living soul, Elsie!"

The little sister promised cheerfully.

"And there is one thing more—I'll do what she said about to-morrow. I'll send that prince boy a note to-night to say he must wait till afternoon. If he won't wait, I don't care."

"That settles how much you do care for the prince boy, anyway," remarked Elsie.

The note went, and next morning Alixe waked, late, to the old indecision. What had she gained by putting off the crisis for half a day? How had she been so influenced by the words of a clever, casual stranger? It was the *métier* of a whole world of people whom she had only read about to charm and manip-

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ulate simple persons. She had come in contact with one of these, and had been manipulated—that was all. It was as Elsie said.

Yet, even as she thought this, the memory of that frank and high-bred face rose to answer the thought. However—Alixé tossed her arms restlessly above her head on the pillow in the dim quiet of her room—however, there was nothing else thinkable: it was that. She insisted, she whispered the words aloud: "*It was that.*" And the prince was still to be answered that afternoon.

A knock at the door. Elsie with mail—American mail.

"Draw up the shades, Elsie dear, and ring for my breakfast. I'm glad you let me sleep; I was tired. Oh, what a lot of letters!"

She sat up in bed, with a braid over her shoulder, and a blue bow much on one side of her head. She slipped the letters across each other. "Betty Ord; and that one's a man—Bob McLean, I think." (A woman prolongs the joy of the postman like this.) "And that's Aunt Elizabeth—she's at Saranac. And this is a bill—oh, joy! Why do bills——"

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She stopped short. It was the under letter of the pile. All the other letters, unopened, slid to the floor. Elsie, turning from the window-shades, saw.

"Alixé ! Has something happened ?"

Alixé held out the under letter—and drew it back.
"Him."

"Him ? Who ? Oh !" Elsie was on her knees by the bed. "Not—Jim Arnold ?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you open it ?"

"I—can't." She stared at the big, bold, black writing.

"I'll open it."

Alixé pushed back the hand. She glanced at her sister. "I should say not." Then she slid a forefinger inside the flap—and stopped. "It stirs me all up again. I was getting peaceful. What's he writing for ?"

"Read it, goose !"

And, while she read, the little sister knelt, with eyes glued on her—eager, patient, faithful, like a good little sensible dog which waits the master's

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erratic time to throw a bone. There was only a short page of the vigorous, unmistakable writing—Elsie could see so much with perfect honor. And Alixe must have read it six times before the guardian angel remonstrated:

“Alixe, aren’t you going to tell me?”

With that the blond braid flapped in her face and Alixe was hugging her. “Dear old Elsie—good little Elsie!”

“Your hair is in my mouth, Alixe—brr!” responded Elsie with disgust. “Let me read the letter.”

“No!” And then, “Why—I think you could. The words of it don’t mean much.”

“Golly!” remarked Elsie, taking possession. “What’s all the fuss about, then? The postage-stamp?” She read—aloud:

“A man doesn’t deserve anything when he has been a fool. I know that. But once in a while a man gets what he doesn’t deserve, and I’m going to try. Everything may have happened. I know that, too. But if you don’t tell me not to, I’m coming. Now.

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This letter should reach you Monday, the 6th. If I get no cable I'll sail Wednesday, the 8th."

That was all.

"It doesn't finish up very gracefully, does it?" inquired Elsie. "Sort of stops in the middle." And she bent and kissed her sister in a motherly way. "He's a fool, you know. He said so."

Alixie clutched her letter. "In spots—yes, he is. But, you see, he is also—the Only Man in the World." And, as she laughed, holding the big black writing against her face, suddenly she looked up. "Elsie, the lady at Versailles yesterday: she told me—not to decide—till afternoon. And here's—his letter. How—did—she know?"

Elsie considered. "Ginger!" she acknowledged. "Lucky fluke, I call it—those things happen sometimes."

The long years, the unending years, are before twenty. That mile-stone passed, one seems to have got beyond the signs that read—it may be fancied—"Lives forbidden to go faster than twelve months a year. By order of the Fates."

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One has got to the open country, and speeding is allowed. And at first it is glorious to speed. The roads are green and gold with May weather; the far landscape is a mist of blossoming trees. The breeze exhilarates as we rush forward to yet more freshness and color. But it grows dusty; it grows hot; hills loom that are hard to climb, the wind bites, and one is a little tired—and the machine goes so relentlessly fast. With that, there are places of shade and rippling water; there are hands stretched from the wayside; there are eyes that shine into ours with a new look, undreamed of, thrilling; but the machine whirls on. For sorrow or joy we may not wait. The merciless, merciful motor of the years whirls us past troubles and bliss alike—the machine goes.

Alixé was twenty-two on the morning in Paris when Elsie brought her the American mail. There was no answer cabled, but there was an answer given to the prince that afternoon, in an interview which, to the honor of both, left them friends. The day was lived through, and ten days more, and then duly arrived the Only Man in the World, and

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crooked paths were made straight and dark places made light. And immediately, with no regard for a trousseau, there must be a wedding, which there was.

And in a turn of the hand five years were gone and she was back. She and the man were back in Paris, and were due to dine at the gorgeous great house of the prince and princess. For it was out of all drawing that the prince boy should be unhappy for long. Within a year of his heart-breaking a girl happened along—an American girl, which prettily connected the old love to the new—and the prince once more was heels over head in love, and this time not in vain. He married the girl and her trillions of Western money, and all went merry as a marriage bell; and continued to go fairly merry, as things are, for the boy and girl seemed to have only one trouble, that of keeping up with their money; which is a trouble that most people face with courage.

Alixé, sitting at the great dinner-table, regarded the prince with that mixture of feelings which fogs a woman in like case. The man had belonged to her—so he had said; she had refused him, and he had been stricken; now he was happy with another

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woman. She wished him to be happy—yet it was soothing that he should seem not too aggressively happy. The slightly harassed look in the flashing dark eyes—Alixé pleasantly considered whether she could have kept that look away.

Just then the woman who sat next spoke to her. For a mishap had come to the feast at the last moment, and it was short one man, so that, instead of a black coat on either side, Alixé had on her left a graceful person in lace and violets, with gray eyes and bright color, and already, at thirty or so, gray hair. A piquant person—the more so as she was Irish. In the speech of a cultivated Irishwoman—the best English in the world—with the full, round vowels, and the clear consonants, and the pretty burr of strength on the closing of the syllables, she made a most unexpected remark.

“Please,” she threw at the American impulsively, “please let me look at your hands.”

Alixé, smiling—for Miss Daley was very winning—held them out. The Irishwoman examined the palms eagerly.

“’Tis just as I thought.” The two, in the chatter

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of the big dinner-table, were unnoticed and alone. "I was right—just. I knew 'twas so before I saw." And she laughed, with eyes and dimples and radiant, shifting color all joining. "I'll tell you something about yourself that it's possible you don't know. You've"—she hesitated a second—"you've the second sight."

"What!" Alixe gasped. "What do you mean, Miss Daley?"

"Excuse me for being so blunt, but the moment I saw you I thought it—there's a look; I could hardly wait to make sure." She gazed seriously at the young American woman with her bright gray eyes. "Don't be offended," she said. "It's a wonderful gift. I've the same power," she went on, "and I've had experience. You've the gift of seeing things that most people are not aware of."

"But I don't want to," protested Alixe.

"Oh, don't say that," the pretty Irishwoman smiled at her. "'Twill do you no harm. 'Tis only another open door to life."

"I think you're mistaken," Alixe reasoned; "for I've never seen—ghosts, or anything."

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"Are you sure?" Miss Daley asked. And then, "However that may be, you've got the power. It may happen to do you good sometime—for that depends on yourself, like most else. And I'm sorry indeed if I've troubled you——"

At that second the hostess's voice spoke Alixe's name from the farther end of the table. "I wish you were going to sail with us to-morrow," she said. "Karl is so hard to amuse when he gets restless—I dread being responsible for him off at sea. And he's always amused and happy when you're about. Do come, won't you?"

"Awfully good of you," laughed Alixe. "What an enchanting time you're going to have! It sounds fairylike."

The princess looked worried. "I hope it will be nice—I suppose so. The yacht is Karl's new toy, and he's mad about it, for the moment. But he has such a lot of toys—it's like being choked with flowers and candies. They're nice, you know—but it's being choked, all the same. We don't have time to enjoy things much, because the next toy has to be played with. All the motors—we haven't done

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much with them; yet Karl thinks we ought to go off on this voyage, and, of course, I want to go, too—I wouldn't miss it."

Some one spoke from down the table.

"Does the baby go?"

"No." The worried look sharpened. "She's only three—she's too young. I have to leave her a good deal because of the cars and the yacht and all that." The young woman laughed a bit sadly. "They're insistent, and the baby doesn't insist. They don't give me a chance to see much of her."

To Alixe's mind came a sentence that she had heard: "When one has always new pleasures, one has no time to enjoy any pleasure; one has no time to enjoy those who are dearest." It came to her who had said the words. It was the Frenchwoman whom she had seen once—once only—in the park at Versailles, on the day before the day that had decided for her all history—on the 5th of October, five years ago.

The princess had lapsed into talk with the grand person at her right, and Alixe turned to the little Irishwoman who had startled her. But at this end

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of the long table they were all launched on a common subject. Some one had caught a word of Miss Daley's, and that had started it—psychological research, ghosts. A man was finishing a story, and there was a chorus:

“How extraordinary!”

“It makes me shiver.”

Then an Englishwoman, a Lady Herristone, caught up the thread, and everybody listened, as everybody always will listen at the promise of a ghost-story.

“It makes me think,” she said, “of something I heard here in Paris last year. I had it directly from one of the people to whom it happened.”

“Tell it! Tell it!” she was urged.

Lady Herristone considered.

“I was trying to remember the exact date,” she said, “for that is the point. Do you recollect how, at the time of the Revolution, the mob marched out from Paris to attack Versailles?”

“Yes, certainly,” people answered.

“Well, when the Queen, Marie Antoinette, heard that news, she was in the park of the Petit Trianon,

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in the *hameau*, the little play-village—you will remember that also. Word was brought to her that the palace gates were about to be attacked, and the Queen said, 'My place is with the King,' and went straight to him, and never came back again to the *hameau*. That is——”

Lady Herristone paused. She had a dramatic fashion of talking, and every one at the table was watching her.

“That is—in life. For they say—and people whom I know believe this—they say that, on the anniversary of that day when the mob marched from Paris, the last day she ever spent in the place she loved best—on that day the Queen walks in the park. Every year some one meets her there, and talks to her, but is always unconscious of who it is until afterward. It always seems to the persons who meet her that a beautiful Frenchwoman in fancy dress has spoken to them—that's all. It's a pretty story, isn't it?” Lady Herristone appealed to the dinner-table. “And it's true. A man told me to whom it happened. There are many people in Paris to-day who will vouch for it. This man be-

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lieves that he spoke, talked, two years ago, to Queen Marie Antoinette."

The brilliant company faced toward her; from right, from left, from across, the faces bent to hers; it was quite still. At last Alixe spoke.

"What day is it—the day when the Queen walks in the park?" she asked slowly, and her voice sounded strange.

"The 5th of October," Lady Herristone answered. And from across the table Alixe's eyes met her husband's.

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IT was the fifth green. The two caddies slid the putters into the bags with one hand and slipped the drivers automatically out toward the players with the other. The men caught the bulgy heads and swung the clubs about as they walked away to the next tee. The caddies, the bag-straps over their shoulders, ran jingling up the hillside and squatted half-way, expectant.

But the players were deliberate. The large man brought out a large handkerchief and mopped himself carefully and sat down on a bench in the shadow of a tree, and the other, slender and boyish at forty-five, the cadet of the United States Senate, rolled his sleeves up farther on his muscular arms, and then swung his driver with infinite pains, infinite exactness of form, half a dozen times at a belated clover head. The man's soul was on his full Saint Andrews's stroke; one would have thought that the

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following through of the club was of more importance to him than the swinging of the political machine, which also lay this autumn, people said, in those slight and strong wrists.

The caddies, perched motionless on the hillside, like sphinxes of a brownie pattern, watched in brooding silence. Caddies miss little, and men's souls are often an open book to them. The fat man's boy spoke first.

"Jones is het up," he observed, with that reverence of spirit toward superiors which one remarks in caddies.

"Huh!" the other answered oracularly. "I know what's het him."

"You're smart," Jones's boy retorted with sarcasm. "So d' I. 'Cause it's hot."

"Naw," the Delphic oracle shook his head. "'Tain't so much the weather's it's his rotten play-in'. 'Tain't so hot. Look at the senator. He ain't sweatin'."

"He ain't stout," argued the Jones partisan. "An' he ain't got Jones beat yet, nohow. He's only three holes up on him."

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"The senator can do Jones any day," said the senator's caddy with firmness. "He's got him rattled now. Jones played that last hole durn bad"—which had been Jones's own statement, and was therefore perhaps correct. "What's more," the boy continued, launching into side issues, "the senator can handle Jones in politics. I heard Abner H. Green say that."

Abner H. Green was the president of the golf-club, so there seemed no going beyond this dictum. The Jones boy looked dejected.

"Did you?" he inquired lamely, and then his face brightened. "Well, now," he began excitedly, "now you listen. My pa said——"

"Huh," was the brief interruption of the senator's caddy. Its force was felt by the other.

"You can 'huh' till you bust, but my pa he knows," he asserted indignantly. "He reads two papers an' he knows—an' he said—an' I tole him—an' I tole him I'd caddied for Milton B. Jones an' he said he was a big man, an' he ran some kinder machine an' anyway he said he was the pres'dent of the 'Publican committee, an' he said he could

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handle the men like he pleased. So—" The Jones caddy glared.

But the senatorial caddy had not weathered thirteen hoary winters for nothing. "Chairman of th' Republicum State Committee—I guess I know that," he corrected scornfully. "An' I don't care 'f he is. Abner H. Green said the senator could handle him. I guess he'd oughter know—he's pres'dent this golf-club. That's all I know, but it's 'bout enough." He relapsed into stately silence.

The Jones boy was staggered, but having missed his shot, risked a blow with the butt of the musket. "Huh! what's a senator anyhow?" he inquired with bitter contempt. "You needn't think you've got the only pebble on the beach. I caddied for just as good a senator's your'n, only yesterday. That's him now," and he nodded back over the grassy stretch where, on the green of the last hole, apart from a group of three others, a tall figure stood etched against the sky.

The older boy smiled ironically. "Him? Oh, yes, he's one all right, and he's a nice man is Senator Muir. But they's different kinds of senators, they is,

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an' he ain't the first kind. I heard Green tellin' his cousin, that was visitin' him, that Muir wasn't nothin' but a State senator, an' my man, Duke," he nodded toward the tee, "was a—was a—United senator, I guess he said."

The other boy turned a triumphant face on him quickly. "I guess you did hear that, and I guess you heard more'n that, 'cause I was there that day, an' Abner H. Green said how all the same it looked like Muir were goin' to be next governor. I guess governors is higher'n any kinder senators, United or nothin', so there!"

The older boy shifted his caddy-bag with a rattle and spat manfully. "We wuz talkin' 'bout Jones's game," he stated impressively.

Down on the bench by the tee there had been political conversation also. The situation as sketched by the two caddies was more or less assumed by the two players. Jones, his handkerchief still in his hand, and his hand on his fat knee, gazed thoughtfully up the hill where he would fain send his next ball, and listened to the senator who, sitting beside him, beat the earth between his feet with the

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head of his driver as he talked. And as he talked he lifted his eyes to the narrow path down which they had come. Another pair of caddies ran jingling up the hill to join the first, and down the path two men were nearing them. The leader was a tall man of perhaps sixty years with a distinction about him, the look which should go with race but which is sometimes misplaced and fitted to simple character. So it happened that Cecil Duke, the United States senator, with the bluest blood of the country in him, was small and insignificant while this self-made man who began life as a shopkeeper in a small town had the air of a prince. He stopped and stood silent, friendly, as he saw the two on the bench. Duke spoke.

"Pass us, won't you, Senator Muir," he said. "I've done up Jones and he's got to resuscitate before we play this hole."

Muir went straight to the sand-box as he answered in half a dozen words. "Thank you," he said. "I hope Mr. Jones will recover. It's seldom fatal," and there was a clean-cut sound as his driver struck the ball, and a whir as it rose and soared up, far up over the worst hill in the course.

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All four watched spellbound as Muir's caddy ran on and on up the slope, and stopped well over its brow.

"Beauty!" pronounced the senator, and Jones sighed.

"Must be two hundred yards," he said solemnly.

The newcomers strode off, and the eyes of the two met each other. There was silence for a long minute, and the senator suddenly began as if taking up a conversation where it had been dropped.

"I regard it mostly as a question of confidence," he said. "Muir is the abler man; he would make the better governor. But it is important—it is absolutely necessary, as you know, Jones, that the next governor should not obstruct this street-railroad franchise tax bill of ours. And now comes a fact which I have just learned, the fact to which I referred in my letter. I understand Muir has large interests in the street railways in Rivertown, and this bill would cut into them severely. You can't expect the man to be anxious for a measure that would take twenty-five thousand dollars out of his pocket."

The chairman stuck out his under lip. "Muir

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told me that he approved of the bill—that he hoped its passage would not be obstructed.”

“So he said to me also,” the senator agreed. “And if he is a man of exceptional honor he may be sincere. But it is a danger. It would be a temptation to many men, to take the governorship on the understanding that he must sacrifice the money, and then balk at throwing away twenty-five thousand. Once governor, he can pass that bill or veto it, and plenty of fine reasons could be found for a veto. It’s a ticklish case,” and the senator batted the sand firmly with his driver.

Jones rubbed his damp handkerchief considerably over his bald head. “He’s the best candidate we have to put forward,” he said. “Popular, very popular. And a man of brains. But of course there’s Harrison; the convention will divide between these two. We can count on Harrison for doing as we wish.”

“That’s just where it is,” agreed the senator. “We can count on Harrison and we can’t on Muir. Muir is a devil of a chap for reserve. I can’t make him out. He may be as high-minded and simple as

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he appears, and he may be deep and slippery. I wish I knew."

"We know Harrison," Jones suggested.

The senator smiled sarcastically. "He's not difficult. It's too bad to give the people a figure-head for a governor, but it won't be the first time, and he's not a bad sort. We could put him through. Yet Muir would make a fine chief executive—we could be proud of him." He stopped and then went on. "He hasn't an idea I know about that stock of his. Don't mention it, for it might complicate things. You and I will decide this nomination," and he looked at the perspiring chairman and almost added aloud—"and I will decide you." But he merely elaborated the other statement. "The convention will be about even for Muir and Harrison; we'll merely have to swing a few votes to decide it. And it all hangs, rather curiously, on a moral point—whether Muir is or is not to be relied upon."

"My advice is to nail the man we are sure of," said the chairman, and the senator arose.

"I'm inclined to think so, but the convention is not until Friday and this is Tuesday. Now let's play

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golf—that's more important. My honor, isn't it?"

He put his hand deep into the box of wet sand and patted a tee into shape and laid a ball tenderly on its peak. He swung the driver once again and then took his position in careful form. "Fore!" he shouted across the little valley, and the caddies, deep in discussion, jumped and stood alert.

Half an hour later, on the ninth green, close by the club-house, the senator with a theatrical twelve-foot put accomplished the destruction of Mr. Jones, and the latter, breathing heavily, drew out his watch.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I've got to run for it. To-morrow at three. Will you pay my caddy?" And he disappeared into the house with lumbering celerity.

The senator poured silver into one hand with the other, and drew the caddies into conversation as he counted, for he was by way of being an amateur in humanity, this man of the world who had been born well and bred well and had lived well, who had seen most of the complicated phases of

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society which the world had to show, and who had come by that road to a knowledge of the piquancy of simplicity. He liked to hear these boys talk for the raw human nature which sunned itself, unshadowed by conventionality, in their startling sentences. Smiling to himself over the remarks of the youngsters, he sauntered, his bag over his shoulder, toward the club-house.

There were few women at the Country Club to-day and the men were all out on the links—the house looked quite deserted. But in one corner of the broad piazza sat a small figure in a quaker-like gray gown, and as the senator, coming up, looked curiously at the slightly incongruous apparition where smart women in smart clothes filled, ordinarily, the scene, he saw that she was knitting with lavender wool.

He caught his breath, for like the magic of a developer poured on the blankness of a film, a picture which lay always sleeping in a deep place of his heart flashed into light at the sight of the simple business. There had been an old aunt of his in an ancestral farmhouse in Connecticut who had meant

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much to his boyhood, who had kept a gentle hold on his manhood until one June day only a year ago she had made the change, to her mind not a great one, from New England to heaven. When he saw the little woman tranquilly knitting on the Country Club piazza he smelled suddenly the yellow roses that grew under the dining-room window at Elm-field; he was on the side porch of the old shingled house, and the late afternoon sun lay in streaks over the board floor; across the garden, against the cedar hedge, blazed the blue of serried ranks of larkspur; Aunt Rosina sat in the rocking-chair he remembered; her needles flashed through the silvery shimmer of lavender wool, and her voice called him again as he had loved to hear it always, "My boy."

The senator was all at once aware that he was standing transfixed on the edge of the green, and staring brazenly at a stranger. He moved slowly in, but his eyes dwelt still as he moved, lingeringly, on the sober little figure, and as he looked he saw the ball of wool fall and roll softly toward him. He sprang to pick it up eagerly—he had so many times

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picked up big, soft lilac balls like this—and laying down his clubs he held it toward her with a smile.

"I hope it isn't soiled," he said—the senator's manner could be very winning when he chose.

"Thank you, sir, very much"—there was distinct primness and shyness in the old-fashioned speech, but the senator liked it. He held the light, round mass in his hand a moment more, making a pretext of brushing off dust.

"It's a very pretty color," he ventured, and a pair of startled blue eyes met his with pleased wonder, eyes that, shining from under gray hair and set in a face touched with wrinkles, yet were in all essentials sixteen-year-old eyes.

"I think it's pretty," she agreed and then, as if yielding to temptation, she went on in a voice shy at first, but gathering assurance. "They laugh at me at home and say I'm foolish over lavender. But it seems to me when a woman gets to my age, and it isn't just proper to wear red, and pink, and blue any more, a touch of color is a real pleasure." She stopped and looked at him a trifle apologeti-

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cally, a little startled at the boldness of the adventure.

The senator kept his eyes firmly on the knitting, and his matter-of-fact, friendly voice was reassuring. "Indeed I don't see why you shouldn't wear the pinks and blues," he said with a sort of gentle authority, as he might have said it to Aunt Rosina. "I think you—I think it would be charming," and he lifted his gaze to see a flush creeping over the delicate wrinkles and making the childlike old face, as he had said, charming. It had been a very pretty girl who had evolved into this staid and quaker-like little woman of sixty, and the beauty and the youth were part of her yet. He went on quickly, for the shy look in those girlish blue eyes—"But there is nothing prettier than lavender, and I like very much to see women—to see ladies knitting." He knew by instinct that it would please her better to have him say "ladies" than "women." Even to-day, in the country, the emancipated, straight-from-the-shoulder word "women" has a slightly rough sound to the ear.

"Do you?" she asked with quick interest, her

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touch of embarrassment gone. "Does your mother do much knitting work? Or your wife?"

The senator smiled as he had a vision of his last glimpse of his mother, gorgeous in a Paris gown at the head of a glittering dinner-table. "No," he said gently, "I have no wife, and it wasn't my mother I was thinking of, but an aunt of whom I was very fond. May I sit down and talk to you a little while?" he asked, drawing a chair toward her.

"Certainly—I would be pleased to have you," and there was a sudden access of primness again. But the senator knew now how to put her at ease.

"What is it you're making?" he inquired, turning a glance of ignorant masculine appreciation at the soft pile in her lap.

She held it up to show him. "It's a sort of shawl to throw over your shoulders on cool evenings," she explained earnestly. "We used to call all such things 'fascinator,' but that word is going out of fashion now, I'm told. You gentlemen don't know much about them, I presume," and she smiled at him as if making allowance. Then she went on cheerily: "The ladies around here don't do much fancy-work,

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I've noticed, but my! you waste a power of time if you sit with your fingers idle here at the Country Club. Jim—my husband, likes I should come out with him while he's playing the golf, and it's real pretty and I enjoy it. We haven't lived here but two months and I don't know many of the ladies yet but they seem nice and friendly, what I do know, and last Saturday they made me take tea and cakes with them—it was very enjoyable."

The senator had a sudden inspiration to order tea, but he controlled it—that might stiffen her into shyness again. As it was, she talked on happily—she was evidently a great talker in an intermittent way, and there was something attractive to the man of the world in the unconscious, old-fashioned sentences. It was like the flow of a stream through green meadows to one who has lived on the banks of a manufacturing river.

"There isn't to be any tea this afternoon. The company is only Wednesdays and Saturdays," she informed him. "But it's real pleasant here when it's quiet, too. I don't know but I like it full as well. Jim has just started off for another nine holes as he

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calls it—it does his health good to play this game, I'm sure, though it seems a mite silly to me, knocking little white balls for several miles with those crazy-shaped putter-sticks. I walked nearly around one day, but yet I couldn't quite understand the difference between a brassy and a foozle, and I'm sure it would take me a month to learn to do it real well."

"I'm afraid it would," the senator agreed. "It has taken me longer, and I can't do it yet."

"They do say it's slow," said the little woman, "but, of course, I don't comprehend it much, if any. I wasn't brought up to play these newfangled things," and her eyes smiled a certain appeal to his friendliness, "so I'm a little mite stupid about them. But Jim is different, my husband. He's travelled a great deal—been to Europe once and to Washington five times, so he's seen all such things and he takes to them easily. First off he was set on my going with him, but it was always preserving time, or else I had the spring house-cleaning on my hands, or else I was changing girls in the kitchen—always something so I couldn't go. And he would

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come back and tell me about everything, so I used to say to him it was just as good as going myself and a sight less expense. And I'm a little timid about meeting strangers, but Jim—why, he never seems to think about himself. I believe if he was to meet the King of England he wouldn't give a thought to whether he was behaving the right way, but would just take an interest in the King to see if he was a smart man and had brains enough to suit him. He's the least conceited of any person I know, but yet he never seems to have an idea that there's anybody any better than he is—that's Jim—Mr. Muir, I mean."

The senator started slightly, but the little woman in the gray gown did not notice. She was launched on a subject that pleased her and preoccupied with its interest.

"It's funny, isn't it, how folks change as they grow older?" she inquired. "Now when Jim and I kept company in Berryville—that's five miles from Rivertown—I was called the lively one of the two. My father was the doctor and we had a big house and two horses, and we girls had lots of beaux

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and I was always the one for going. But Jim, he was the son of the Presbyterian preacher, and a sort of quiet young fellow. He kept a little dry-goods store, first off, but that was because he was poor and it was the best thing he could find to start with. He never liked that business—he always wanted to be a lawyer, as he was later. And he was always studying nights instead of beaung me to parties like the other young men. I think—” the blue eyes smiled with a reminiscent mischief—“I think maybe that was the reason I liked him—because I couldn’t get him so easy. The other girls joked me a good deal when I took Jim. They said I would have to talk to him and then answer myself—he was that quiet. But I didn’t care—I was smart enough to know a real man when I saw him.” Her head gave a defiant little toss as if answering those laughing “girls” of forty years ago. “And father stood by me. He said to me, ‘Letitia, you’ve done well. Jim’s as good as gold, and what’s more, he’s capable. And what’s still more, he’s a man of his word—character counts for success in the long run—you’ll see.’” The little woman stopped a moment and her

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face grew thoughtful. "Maybe father was right, but it don't seem so to me. Of course, I wouldn't have Jim any other way, but I can't help seeing how keeping his word hasn't meant success to him. He's lost more'n he's gained that way, but still"—her face brightened—"still self-respect's worth most, don't you think so?"

A few people had been coming and going at the other end of the big piazza while the two sat talking, and more than one had looked curiously to see the distinguished senator, whose small, trim figure was well known in many societies, deep in conversation with an unknown little woman wearing a gown quite evidently the *chef-d'œuvre* of a country dress-maker. A tall and handsome girl with a sophisticated face walked out from the house at this moment and called to him gayly.

"Senator, we're having tea and drinks and no end of luxuries on the other gallery. Won't you come? We're pining for you."

He was on his feet instantly, but did not move a step. "Thank you, Miss McAllister—I can't this afternoon. But you'll give me a chance another day,

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won't you?" and he still stood firmly by his chair as she waited. So, tossing a sentence or two toward him, she went back as she had come, and he turned to Mrs. Muir. He frowned at the interruption as he saw that she was in a flutter of shy embarrassment.

"I won't detain you, sir," she began. "You mustn't let me keep you from your lady friends. I can do very well alone and Jim—Mr. Muir—will be coming soon. Do join your friends, sir," and she tried to bow him away.

The senator turned his back squarely to the door whence Miss McAllister had issued and sat down facing her, a little nearer than before. He smiled confidentially.

"I'd so much rather stay with you," he said, and the charm of his manner and the sincerity of it had their way.

"I've enjoyed visiting with you very much," and she regarded him doubtfully. "I'd be pleased to have you stay, sir, if you really wish to."

"I really wish to," he answered, and she could not doubt him.

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"I'm afraid I've been talking a sight of nonsense," she apologized. "Father used to say I was an awful steady talker, but Jim seems rather to like it, so I get into the habit."

The senator had a pretty old-fashioned stateliness once in a while which he had caught from a fine old grandfather. "I have been not only interested but honored, Mrs. Muir, by everything that you have said to me," he assured her with an air, and the flattery of it went straight, as intelligent flattery always goes straight to a normal woman's heart. "But you were in the middle of things," he went on. "I wanted to hear what you were going to say."

"Probably wasn't much," said Mrs. Muir. "I was talking about Jim as I remember—Mr. Muir, I mean. I started to call him the senator first off when he was made that, but he wouldn't let me—said it wasn't good form. I don't know how on earth that man knows all the little wrinkles, but he does."

"Some people have a gift that way," said Duke gently. Then, as if touching with a light hand the lever of a delicate machine, "but you were going to

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tell me, I think, how your husband's respect for his word had hindered his success. Will you not?"

The man knew to a shade how much to dare, and a quality in his manner made it seem pleasant that he should dare more than other people. Instead of being frightened she was stimulated by this quiet demand on the intimacies of her history. She smiled at the senator.

"Seems funny a stranger would care to hear about it," she said. "But my! I feel as if we were old friends by now. You seem sort of real homelike." She looked hard at him a moment, and her blue eyes took on a mistiness. "Jim and I had a boy once—he lived to be five. I always keep his birthdays, and if he'd stayed he'd have been almost your age, and seems to me he'd have looked a little like you."

The senator flushed, for his long youthfulness was a trial to him. "I'm older than you think me," he said, and then: "But I am glad to remind you of your boy. And you're going to tell me how your husband kept his word to his disadvantage, aren't you?"

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With that new thought of the likeness to the little face that had never grown dim in her memory, the woman would gladly have told him anything. A dimple flashed into her soft cheek. "Why yes, if you want to hear. Lots of times Jim's done that—kept his word when 'twasn't to his good—but this time I'm thinking of was the most so. You see when father died my brother Tom was just growing up and we could all see that he wasn't a reliable sort. Oh, a good boy, you know, but full of wild ideas, and no head for business. So father, just before he died, made Jim promise he'd stand by Tom as if he was his own brother, and see that he didn't get into trouble. And Jim promised, bless him. Tom worried along at this and that, and three or four times he failed for small amounts and Jim set him up again, and finally he settled pretty well, and for a year we thought he was going to do all right. And meantime Jim and I had been saving and we'd got together a capital of ten thousand dollars, and Jim heard of the telephone business, which you know was new thirty-five years ago. Well, he studied it and he made up his mind it was going

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to be a great thing. And so when the chance came along to invest in it he was ever so pleased, and decided he'd put all our money, the ten thousand dollars, into it. Jim has lots of sense about such things and he seems to be able to tell beforehand what's going to succeed. He's never made a mistake."

The senator smiled. "I've heard that—" he began, and stopped short. "I've heard it said that some men had that faculty," he completed.

"Yes, sir. Jim—Mr. Muir—is that way. So Jim was as sure as living that in five years our ten thousand dollars would be two hundred thousand and we had a sight of plans when just at that moment my brother Tom failed again. I don't understand much about business but I know that it was just ten thousand dollars that was needed to fix things and start Tom over. Well, that was a real hard time. Jim walked the floor all of one night, he hated so to give up that chance at the telephone business, and, of course, I was upset because of Jim and because of Tom. So finally, not thinking of myself but of Jim, I begged him to let Tom go. It wasn't fair he should be sacrificed for a boy that

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didn't have it in him to succeed anyhow. I talked to Jim that way and begged him, and my sister Sophie, she came and talked the same. But Jim wouldn't consider of it for a moment, because he said he'd given his word to father. He had to see that Tom shouldn't get into trouble and there wasn't anything said about whether it was inconvenient to him—Jim said. Sophie and I were both real out of patience with him, but just the same he kept his word and started Tom all over and within the year Tom died, and then Jim felt kind of glad he'd done it even if he'd lost the chance of his life. And I guess it was that, too, for I've heard said that ten thousand dollars at that time would have been near half a million by now."

The pleasant voice with its slight burr, with its rural inflections here and there, had stopped, and there was silence on the large empty piazza. A locust's clear, strident call sang a short song of hot weather and still air, and ceased suddenly. The senator—his hands clasped on one knee, his brows drawn together above eyes which gazed considerably over the velvet ninth green and out beyond

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to tossing fields of rye and spreading elms, and away where faint hills rimmed the horizon bluely—the senator seemed lost in thought. So quiet he was that the little woman spoke timidly.

“I’m afraid I’ve talked to you so much you’re tired out, sir,” she said, and at that he turned his eyes toward her and smiled almost tenderly, the smile of conscious strength toward unconscious and appealing weakness.

“I was thinking,” he said, as if half-speaking to himself, “that so intricate are the workings of the mills which grind men’s motives and actions that a good deed thrown into the wheels in darkness might yet come out into the light as a crown of glory. Bread cast upon the waters sometimes takes such a winding way for its return and comes back so changed that the original morsel may not always be identified.”

The little country woman had not heard her new friend talk in this way. She looked alarmed.

“I—I don’t know exactly what you mean, sir,” she stammered, “but—but if you’re trying to comfort me with the idea that Jim will ever get anything

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out of that money, it's no use. We've given that up for good long ago," she said smilingly. "And there's worse things to lose than money, so don't you worry for me," she reassured him. "Besides, now Jim's got quite some stock in the street railways in Rivertown and we're hoping for good returns out of that—but we're not so bad off anyway."

The last word fell by its own weight, for the speaker started as she spoke it, and gazed brightly at a man who had just sent a long approach shot from a hundred yards away, whose ball was even then tinkling down the shaven surface of the green.

"Why, there's Jim this minute!" she exclaimed. "That's his ball—Oh, look out! Dear, dear! There!" And relief was in her tone. "I declare I thought, one second, the ball was going plumb into that hole—but it's safe now," and she sighed happily, and the senator laughed, and his eyes were so filled with pleased amusement as she met them that, though she did not understand, she could not but be pleased as well. He got up and lifted the rattling bagful of clubs from the floor, and waited as Muir's tall figure swung toward them. He glanced from his wife

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to Duke with slightly astounded eyes, and the latter spoke.

"Senator, I wish you'd thank Mrs. Muir for me, better than I can do it, for a delightful hour," and he turned and took the little woman's hand. "I shall look forward to seeing you again—many times, I hope," he said, and was gone.

Ten minutes later the two sat in the car flying toward town, and Mrs. Muir began to ask questions.

"Who did you say that pleasant-spoken young man was, Jim? I couldn't catch the name, and you were in such a hurry with your paddies, and your sticks and all, that I didn't like to bother you. I want to know because he's the homiest, plainest, most like our own folks of anybody I've seen yet."

Muir answered quietly, but there was a gleam in the kindly glance which rested on his wife's animated face. "That was Senator Cecil Duke," he said.

"No! Is that the great Senator Duke—Well, now!" exclaimed the little woman. "Why, I didn't suspicion it was anybody big. He seems as com-

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mon as you or me! Why, Jim, I talked away to him just as easy as if it was you."

"What did you talk to him about?" Muir's slow tones demanded.

"Oh, I don't know. The knitting began it. Then we got chattering over golf, and then, of course, Jim, you know, I always do talk about you, deary." She laid her hand in perfect confidence of being understood, on her husband's arm, and as he tightened his big muscles to hold it there, she had no hint of the sudden chill that struck in at the words:

"You ought not to bore people with me, Letty."

"But he wasn't bored, Jim—he was interested. He kept asking questions. You ought to have heard him." And the vague fear closed its freezing clutch on his soul.

"What questions did he ask you, Letty?"

"Oh, I can't remember exactly, dear," she answered brightly, pleased at this detailed interest from her reserved and silent husband. "Lots of things about you, Jim—I think he must admire you a great deal."

"Did you by any chance tell him anything about

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my affairs—that I had stock in the Rivertown street railways, for instance?”

“Yes,” she nodded smiling. “I did tell him that—I remember distinctly.” There was something suddenly in her husband’s attitude that frightened her. “Was that wrong? Have I made you trouble? Oh, Jim, if I have!”

Muir, his head turned away, stared out of the car at the sliding fields, at the monotone of world which lay against an orange ball of sun. But he did not see the picture. His gaze was introspective, and he looked at the ruin of the hope of strenuous years. He knew, or thought he knew, that the knowledge of his interest in the Rivertown railways would destroy Senator Duke’s faith in his support of the street-railway franchise tax bill. He had hoped, as his stock stood in another name, that his ownership of it would not come to his ears. And he knew his own honesty and single-mindedness. The ambition of ten years of his life had been to be governor of his State; when at the crucial point he had seen that the nomination hung on this tax measure and that the next governor must sign

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the bill which would mean to him a loss of twenty-five thousand dollars, he had considered the question carefully. He was not an extremely rich man and the twenty-five thousand dollars meant a sacrifice, but he had resolved to make it for the honor which seemed to him the crown of a lifetime—the governorship. He meant to sign the bill. Yet these men would not believe it. Certainly his chance was gone now—gone in an hour's idle talk. A sea of rage surged, beat against the walls of his heart. For the first time in their life he was deeply, passionately angry at his wife, and stinging words shaped themselves in his mind. But he was always a slow speaker, and before the words were uttered a thought flashed across him. He remembered a promise he had made to himself when, after the boy died, he had watched for months her struggle to fight out of her bitter sorrow, for his sake, back to life and brightness. He had said then that never would he consciously bring unhappiness to the brave and unselfish soul. He knew that it would be a knife in her heart if he told her what she had done to-day. And it was done; he must suffer, but she need never know; he would keep that unspoken

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promise. He put the grip of his will on the throat of the anger which seemed like a wild animal in him; slowly, strongly, he choked it back.

The little woman's voice spoke anxiously: "Jim, why don't you answer? Have I done anything that was wrong?"

He turned a face to her twisted into a smile. "I'm not apt to think anything wrong that you do, am I, Letty?" he said gently, and patted her hand.

Mr. Milton B. Jones heaved himself up from his chair in Senator Duke's library. The senator stood back as if impressed with the fear that some loosely anchored bit of him might roll off.

"So you see, senator," he concluded, "Muir is the man, as I've told you all along, and it wouldn't be a bad plan to write a line to say so." Both of which thoughts were the senator's own, so grafted on the tree of the Jones intellect that the adopted parent stem rejoiced in them as its own fruit.

"Yes," he repeated with decision, "Muir is the man and you must write and tell him so." And he bumped against the door-jamb and oozed away.

The trim figure of the other stood thoughtful

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in the middle of the room, a moment, then moved alertly to the table. He swept letters aside and drew a sheet of note-paper toward him. "I must give the man a hint as to where his luck comes from," he murmured, and, ruffled his waving hair backward and looked hopelessly youthful as he frowned consideringly. "Yet I can't use his wife's name." He caught up a pen and wrote rapidly.

That afternoon at five o'clock Muir's latch-key turned in his front door and his wife, in her room, heard him come dashing up the stairs like a boy. She stood to meet him with inquiring eyes, and his lighted face told of good news.

"Read this, Letty."

"My Dear Senator Muir," she began aloud—"The Milkman—The Mansion—What's that word, Jim? It's such a funny hand."

He caught the paper. "Letty, child, you never could read writing. This is the greatest letter of our lives, and I can't have you mangle it. Listen:

" 'My Dear Senator Muir:

" 'Mr. Milton B. Jones, the chairman of the State Republican Committee, and I have come to a

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decision in regard to to-morrow's convention, which I think you have a right to know at once. We have concluded to throw our influence in favor of your nomination for governor, and we consider ourselves happy in supporting a candidate so fitted for the office. If I might, without impropriety, add a word of personal import, I should like you to know that information of important political bearing supplied by your best friend directly effected our decision. Wishing you every good fortune, I am,

“ ‘Sincerely yours,

“ ‘CECIL DUKE.’ ”

Mrs. Muir listened spellbound. “I call that real nice of Mr. Duke,” she said heartily, when her husband's glowing face signified the end. “But I don't just see what you're so excited over, Jim. It's friendly of those two men to be for you, but dear me! That's not so much! What's two men? I presume there'll be two hundred at the convention, won't there?”

“My dear,” said Muir, “I'm afraid you will never do much in politics—your talents are not that way. Letty, Jones will manage the convention to-morrow and Duke will manage Jones. As Cecil

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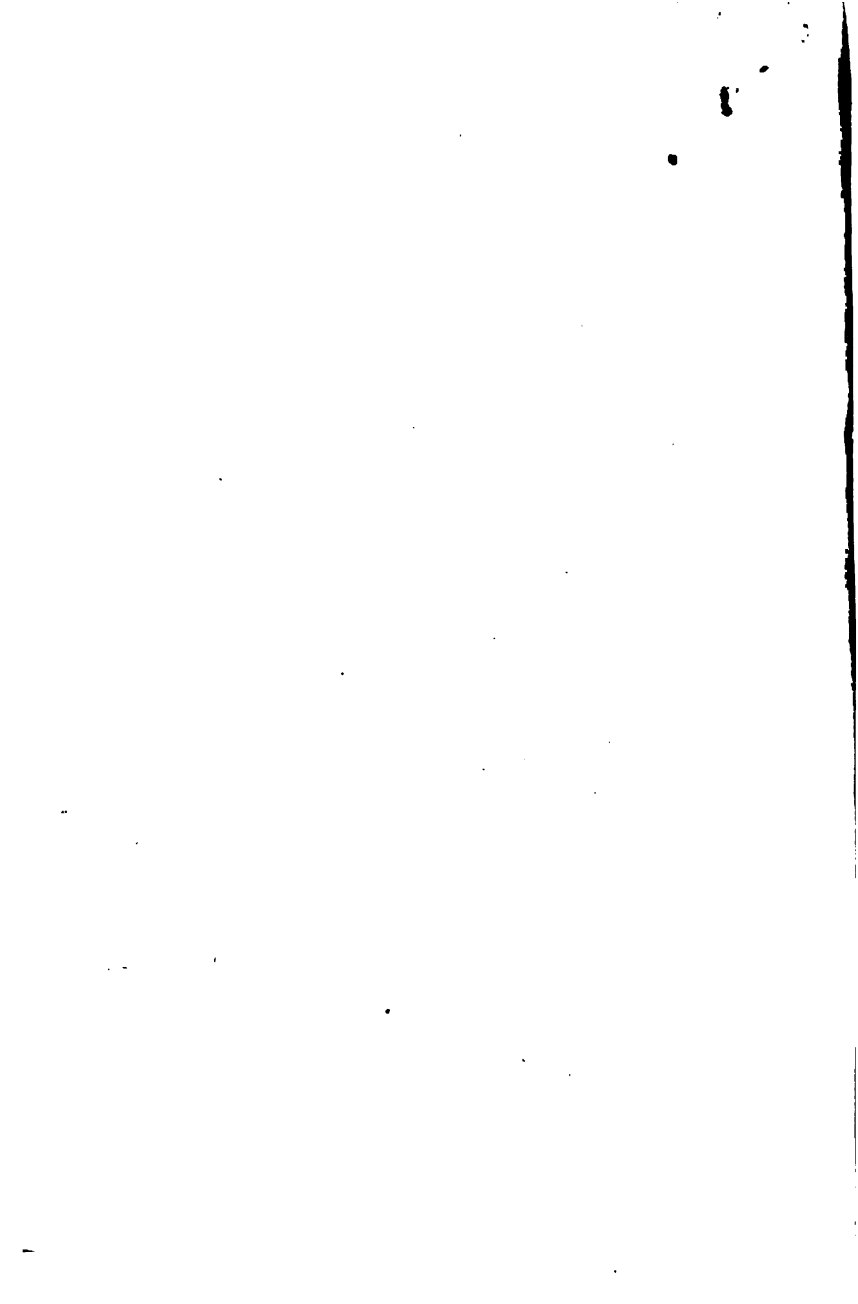
Duke lifts his finger so the nomination goes. And the Republican nomination is the election this fall." It was plain that the future governor wanted badly to whoop for joy. "But I can't think who the senator means by 'my best friend'—the friend who supplied important political information. That puzzles me. Try to help me think who my best friend is, Letty."

Mrs. Muir knitted her brows and blinked. "Now who can that nice young man mean by that?" she meditated.

"Well, we'll probably find out later," Muir concluded happily. Then he bent and drew his wife's arm about his neck and kissed the wrinkled hand on his shoulder. "I know who my best friend really is, Letty, but I don't think the senator does. And, anyway, she hasn't much influence in politics," he said tenderly.

The little woman laughed and laid her face against his. "No, 'tisin't very likely that I'll ever help to make you governor, Jim," she answered.

THE HEALER



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GRAY twilight of a gray afternoon. Through the open windows it swept, and gathered in dusky handfuls, like a veil caught together, in the corners of the room. The girl lying in the white hospital bed felt a vague repulsion as her languid eyes watched the shadows deepen. She did not care much—nothing mattered particularly; yet this all-over grayness was unpleasantly like her life, it occurred to her. If both, twilight and life, might go out into blackness she would be relieved.

Not a new day, not heaven. She dreaded another bright morning and the necessity of living through it; she did not want heaven, whatever it might be. Heaven meant life and activity and a multitude of happy people. She was too tired for all that. She did not want to be happy—the thought of it was an effort. She wanted only to be let alone, to rest. After a long, long nothing, perhaps she might care again for something; she could not tell—not now.

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Only—she moaned uneasily. Why should thoughts come when all she wanted was peace? But here they were—trooping, throbbing thoughts, torturing her nerves: the bitter thought of what she had meant to be and do; the stinging thought of others who were worth while, who had begun the race with her; the practical, horrible thought of money lacking; the aching thought of her loneliness, her homelessness; the thought of vanishing youth, of a face grown haggard, a voice deprecating; beyond them all, worst, the thought of herself, of her changing character. She remembered the undaunted courage, the help and generosity and vigor she had meant to bring to the world as her thank-offering for life—all come to this, a hospital bed, a broken-down neurotic.

“Ah!” She flung a weak arm outside the covers in a sudden flush of suffocating heat, and yet was chilly—nervous invalids know the combination. “Ah!” She would not think; they had told her not to think. “Just let the sound of the stream run through your brain,” the doctor had said.

She listened. Rushing down the valley in the large

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grounds there was a stream—a liquid, unending, deep chord of many broken notes! Her weak power focussed into listening; with that a thing happened which she had learned to wait for as an event—the one thing that held her attention. The sweet, hollow silver of the booming water divided, changed into voices that called, talked, laughed. There were long, low sentences; there were single questioning words; there were murmuring names spoken and tender half-sounds, all unhurried, all contented and sure and adequate. She did not catch definite words, only intonations, the rise and fall; but the strength of the voices seemed to lift her weakness and bear it out on a calm flood. The stream was her friend; the voices of the stream were unreal voices, yet peace-giving.

Suddenly she wondered what time it was. A clock stood on the table by her bed, its face toward her; but the effort of turning her head on the pillow to look, balked her. More than one ill person knows what it is to be halted by that dread of lifting the hand or moving the head. Yet she must know the time; it appeared imperative. The voices

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had grown confused, coalesced; the bad thoughts were upon her. The effort of stirring a muscle seemed more than she could bear to make; yet to know the time was somehow necessary.

With a sick loathing of the simple act, she turned her head. It was six o'clock. The nurse would be in at half past. Half an hour more of this hideous, lonely March twilight, and then, worse than that, a farce of trying to eat food, the unpleasantness of being cheered by the nurse. Gasping from the effort of looking at the clock, struggling to find a way back to inertia, she lay and stared at the door.

With that a light knock sounded on it, and before she could find a word the door opened and a man came in. In the dimness she could see it was not any of the doctors whom she knew; yet that it was a doctor she knew—a tall, white-haired man, who moved swiftly, with a noiseless step. In a moment he was bending over her; and somehow as he looked down she was smiling into his gray, kind eyes. He drew a chair beside the bed and sat down.

The girl never remembered what he said first; there seemed to be few words—no words at all, she

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thought sometimes. A heavy, old-fashioned gold watch, with a gold face and a massive chain, stayed in her memory. He drew out this and took her thin fingers, as her own doctor did every day, testing her pulse. But never before had any hand enveloped hers with that instant giving of protection, of infinite strength and infinite gentleness; never before had a touch of any one poured into her veins a shock of courage, of swift-coming, definite help. Her sagging nerves stung, with the strange glow that flooded them, like a tide, in deep waves.

Startled, she stared up into the calm face at the bedside; the face was bent, thoughtful, the whole man absorbed in that small business of taking her pulse. Then quietly, yet with a certain masterfulness as of one who is sure of his judgment, he laid her hand back on the coverlet and pressed his own hand on it, covering it lovingly, as one might soothe an unhappy child.

"You are going to get well," he said.

"Oh, no!" she cried miserably. "I don't want to. It's too much trouble—to live. I haven't—the courage." He held her hand now in his. The long, strong,

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steady fingers folded about the anæmic, jerking ones; and the girl believed she felt healing rush in a physical stream from the man's touch. To believe some things is to make them true.

"The courage is coming," he said.

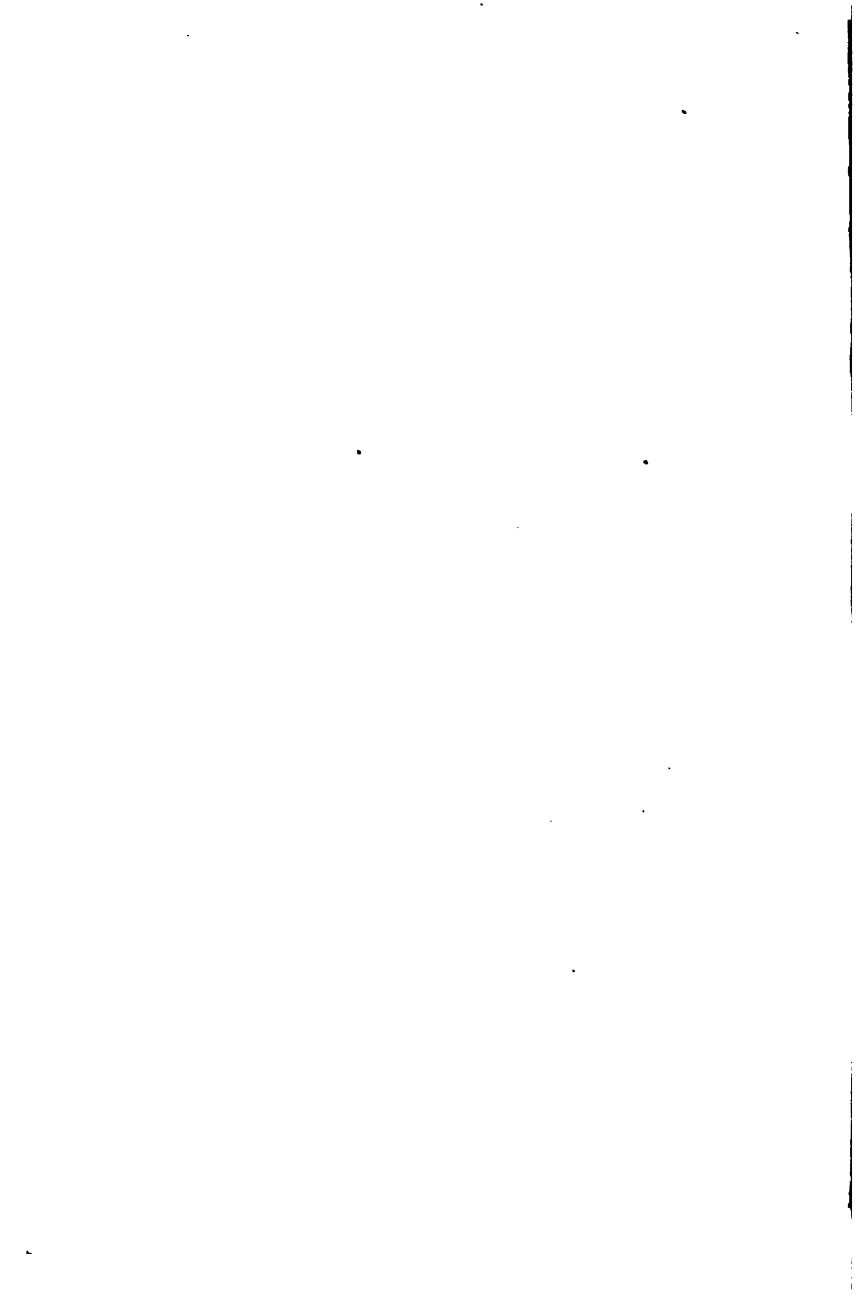
The hand wrapped hers closer and there was, like a miracle, courage indeed creeping into her. The face of strange brilliance—the face of one who has lived and suffered, and fought and found peace—the marvellous, lined, carved face was gazing full into hers.

As she looked, a storm of tenderness and pity twisted, illumined it; and the girl read, as a soul may sometimes read a soul, and knew that the spirit looking through this transparency was torn and eaten by a passion for helping. He was pouring all the force of an extraordinary personality into the effort to help her—pitiful, worn out, useless. And the force was working! With every breath she felt forgotten pulses of abandoned hopes pushing painfully, joyfully, through half-atrophied veins. The doctor began to speak.

"You are going to get well," he said again. "The



"You are going to get well," he said.



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best of your life is coming. You are just beginning—just on the verge of splendid health and long years of love and service! Each of us has a trust in life to do things no one else can do; each must keep the trust and develop the power, or suffer for it by restlessness." The wide, clear eyes were looking now out through the shadowy window; and as he paused the girl heard the stream and the voices, low, contented, calling softly to one another. "Take hold of your life; don't let it drift by. Catch it; fly with it! Don't pray for crutches; pray for wings. And the wings will grow!"

He stood beside her, bending, holding her hand still. The girl stared at him, speechless; he laid her thin fingers back again on the bed and stood so a moment as if reluctant to leave her. Then—"You are going to get well," he repeated.

He was at the door. He opened it noiselessly, but before he passed out turned for one instant; his face was bright and his eyes met hers with a smile of undreamed radiance. The door closed and he was gone.

The girl sat up in bed, excited, eager, as she had

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not been for months, for years perhaps. Who was he, this wonderful doctor? Would he come again? He must come again! It meant life! He had given her an impulse beyond her wildest hopes. Hopes? She had no hope until he came. She must know who he was; she would beg to see him again. She could get well, she would get well, if only he would come and pour courage into her as he had done. Life seemed different, seemed possible. "Not crutches, but wings!" Was it possible that the joy of living was to be for her?

The door opened again. The nurse stopped short.

"What is it?" she asked in alarm. "Are you worse?"

She was at the bedside, trying gently to force the invalid back to her pillow.

"Something has happened," the girl said and smiled; and the smile astonished the nurse more. "Nothing bad! I'm not worse; I'm better. Tell me who the doctor was. Is he in the hospital? Will he come again?"

"What doctor?" The nurse was bewildered.

Quickly the girl, excited, transformed, told of the

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visit she had just had. As she talked she was conscious that the nurse's face was taking on a new expression. There were lights in the room now and she could see it. The nurse was young, impulsive. As the story ended she cried out two words; then stopped and bit her lip and flushed.

"What?" the girl asked eagerly. "Say that again!"

The nurse would not say it. She went across the room, turning her back to the bed, busying herself with bottles on the table.

"Do tell me," the girl pleaded. "I want to know."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you anything," Miss Jones answered haltingly. "I haven't seen him, you see. You'd better ask Doctor Morgan about it," she said. "Now you must lie down and be quiet; you mustn't get too tired." Then, as if irresistibly impelled: "What time was it?"

"Just six," the girl answered. "I had looked that moment. I had the greatest desire to know the time."

"Yes," the nurse whispered—"six." And with a

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quick return to affairs—"Do lie down; you mustn't get tired."

The girl dropped back with a sigh—a sigh of contentment.

"I'm not tired," she said; "I'm rested." Then, as if she told a wonderful bit of news: "I'm going to get well!"

The nurse, straightening the bedclothes, stopped and looked in her face.

"You are," she answered with a manner of solemnity. "There's no doubt about it. You're going to get well."

Slowly, but with a steady pace, she got well. Each day found her a little stronger, with a little more courage to face life, a little more hope; then a little joy in the return of strength and even the wish to take up her part in the fight of living.

Sometimes in the night when she lay awake she said over to herself words that she had not forgotten.

"Not crutches, but wings."

And the wings began to grow.

The strange doctor did not come again. Oddly

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enough, she could not find out who he was, though she tried persistently. Doctor Morgan must know; but he would not treat her questions seriously.

"You dreamed him," was his response always. "The voices down by the stream materialized, and you got the rest out of your subconsciousness."

"I never knew a voice that had white hair and an old-fashioned watch," the girl answered; "and I didn't have one smile like that in my subconsciousness. Doctor Morgan, I believe it was some one very interesting. Why won't you tell me?"

The doctor rose to go.

"People who are getting well as fast as you are don't need to be told things. They just need to go on getting well. Be good and do that."

She persisted a little longer. "I will be good. I'm going to get well," she smiled up at him. "And won't you promise that the day I leave—to comfort me for leaving and to reward me for getting well—you'll tell me all you know about him?"

The doctor hesitated. He looked down at her and considered, rubbing his chin. He answered slowly.

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"Perhaps," he said; and then: "Yes, I'll tell you what I know the day you leave."

Days went by and then weeks, and the healing impulse that had begun in the gray twilight when life was at its lowest ebb did not fail. Strength came, and with its coming the world brightened, and the feeling of fitness for life returned. The joy of health, which no one who has not been ill can know, began to beat in her blood. On the evening before her going away Doctor Morgan came to the girl's room for his last visit.

"You're a disgrace to have about any hospital," he announced genially. "I don't know but I'll ship you to-night. What sort of place is a hospital for a red-cheeked athlete?" With that he went on to give wise advice about keeping the health so hardly gained. "And that's all," he finished.

The girl shook her head though.

"Not all—you promised to tell me, when I came to go, about the strange doctor."

Doctor Morgan looked worried, reluctant.

"You dreamed him," he said, and rubbed his chin as he did when perplexed.

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"That's dodging," said the girl. "You'll tell me—won't you?"

The doctor settled into his chair and clasped his hands round one knee. He considered a moment.

"Yes," he said; "I said I would, so I will. It's such a queer business that I hardly know how to tell it," he reflected aloud. "I'm not sure but you'll laugh. I should if some one got it off to me." He rubbed his hair backward now, to the confusion of the brown locks. "You know, mostly I lie about it," he confided with a boyish gleam in his eyes. "Mostly I tell them it was a famous nerve specialist from New York who happened to be here and whom I asked to go in."

"That's not so?"

The doctor smiled oddly.

"You haven't an idea?"

"Not the least; and your manner is so strange."

"It's a strange situation for the twentieth century and a sane student of facts." The doctor was contemplating the wall behind the bed. "Do you know anything about the history of this institution?" he inquired.

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"Not much: I know that it is old," said the girl.

"Yes; as hospitals go, very old. It was begun in a crude way about seventy-five years ago by a remarkable man. He was young then, very successful, very brilliant. Shortly after it was started a great trouble happened to this man—his wife and two children were drowned at sea. For a time it was thought he would die, too. Then he rallied and threw himself into his work.

"I heard of this," Doctor Morgan interjected, "from an old physician whose father was interne at the time. It was said that from that period his power and his devotion to his work doubled. He lived literally for his patients; he gave strength and time—life in the end—like water; and his insight and judgment grew to be all but miraculous. There are stories on record of cures by the man's sheer personality which I should hesitate to repeat. The place grew rapidly; he was overwhelmed with work. He never saved himself; so he aged fast and at last died in the harness—an old man, yet not much beyond sixty. They found him at six o'clock one night leaning back in his desk chair, his hand holding a

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pencil on a half-written prescription. That was a pretty good death."

The doctor stopped. The girl stared at him. She had never before heard a tone like this in the cheerful, accustomed voice. The little room was still for a moment; it was as if a soldier saluted beside the grave of his general.

"Well," the doctor went on, "ever since his death a queer thing has occurred from time to time—he comes back!"

The girl's pulse jumped and stopped. In her veins was the strange, strong repugnance with which flesh and blood protests against an unknowable order of things. Yet there also was the thrill, the eager curiosity, with which the spirit inside flesh and blood asserts its vital interest in that order.

"He comes back!" she whispered.

"Now you know," said the doctor.

"It was he! He came—to me?"

The doctor nodded.

"The thing happens once in so often, when some one is at the lowest ebb, when— Well," said the doctor, "I don't know that I can define the when,

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for there are different cases; but it's mostly when there's a life concerned that ought to be useful—that needs saving. Always at some nervous crisis—that appears to make the opportunity—always when there is desperate need! And the patient he comes to always gets well—always! They call him The Healer here.”

“Ah,” spoke the girl quickly, “that was what Miss Jones said—‘The Healer’!”

“He comes at six o'clock,” the doctor went on—“the hour at which he died. Oh, I know how absurd all this sounds. I was indignant when I first came and heard the tale. I said I would have no ghost doctors on my staff; but I've lived to take that back. I've lived to—long for him. A man must face facts. Do you realize that I've heard from many people—men, women, and children—the same story you told? They are always excited, always curious. Mostly I lie. I explain about the famous nerve specialist, more or less eccentric, who happened to be here. It's easy; they all believe it, naturally. You are one of the three or four to whom I have told the truth. It seemed to me”—the doctor hesi-

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tated—"that it would help you in the future to know. There is an inspiration about it for a person of your make-up. It's rather wonderful, don't you see, to know there is actually such a thing as undying love, undying service!"

Doctor Morgan stopped, flushed with the revelation of his own feeling; then went on, speaking a bit low.

"There is a spirit of helpfulness through this place—staff, nurses, servants even—which I ascribe to this legend, this circumstance that goes with the place. Everybody in a way lives in the presence of a man who brushes aside death and time to help people who need him. As I said, it's an inspiration. The thing has never gotten outside; that's odd, too. For one reason it would take a good deal of insisting to make outside people even believe that there is such a story. Then, of course, no patient hears it. A nurse who spoke of it to a patient would lose her place at once. Not one of them would do it, for there is an *esprit de corps* on the subject. It's our secret and we keep it among ourselves."

There was a silence. The girl, drinking in every

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word, her eyes fixed on the face of the man talking, waited—said nothing. The man, deep in his thought of the strange affair with which he lived, hardly noticed her now, let his thought wander on, enjoying, it might be, the relief of talking about a thing that he must almost always keep under lock and key. In a moment he spoke again very quietly.

“He does not come always. I’ve known what it is to wish for him. My little lad died.”

“Ah!” the girl said softly, and could say no more. There was silence for a second and the doctor went on again.

“It is not a new idea, of course,” he said. “It’s nothing new certainly; but when this thing happens, as it has happened many times in my fifteen years here, it comes over me with fresh significance in what surroundings we all are likely living—probably as close as our own breath to a universe of unknown powerful influences, personalities—I don’t know what.

“My reckoning is,” he went on thoughtfully, “that at times of great mental stress—psychic upturnings such as you went through—one drops

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the shell of the commonplace; the wall of matter is pushed apart by the power of the spiritual storm. So that the thought, the soul itself of this man, being always ready at the edge of material territory—hovering, as it were, about this place that he loved; longing, as he always did, to help—slips over the boundary and satisfies itself with one of the acts of healing which were his passion on earth—which, I suppose, must be his joy through eternity.

“Of course that’s all rotten, vague guesswork,” said the doctor, and took a rub at his hair and got up. “If you don’t sleep to-night I shall resign from this hospital,” he announced, “for I’ve done a doubtful thing in telling such a story to a patient at bedtime. I believe that I understand you, though, and that it will help you—not hurt you. I think you’ll sleep. I think any thoughts of The Healer must be healing, mustn’t they?”

The girl said, “Yes,” and held out her hand, thinking of that buried sorrow in the man’s soul which he had uncovered for an instant. The doctor clasped the hand, understanding, and was gone.

Shortly, with lights out and windows wide, she

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was lying in the dark; then, listening to the voices of the stream calling, talking low and busily in falling silver cadences, she fell asleep.

People never get through saying that life goes fast, because to each one who says it it is a discovery. Uninterestedly enough one listens to that and other truisms for years until, in a flash on a day, there is an electric shock. Why, this thing is true! Life does go fast! Life is short! The statement is an altogether different affair from what it was yesterday. Yet no one who has not felt that shock will know what these sentences are trying to say.

The girl, Honor Carr, took up her life with that courage and spirit which go most of the way toward happiness. German philosophers of the Romantic School of the eighteenth century, and others before and since, have held that each man's world is quite literally a product of his mind; that each intelligence, in the need of a not-self for a self to work on, fits to its thought a system of other thoughts that is called the material universe.

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Your outer self—your not-self—is as large, as vivid, as your spirit makes it.

One need not, perhaps, go so far or be so literal as Fichte to get the usefulness from such a conception. Many persons with no particular taste for the belt of asteroids between Mars and Jupiter, or for jellyfish or roots of algebraic equations, admit them cheerfully into the universe. Fichte would have trouble, none the less, in proving such persons responsible for such asteroids and jellyfish and algebraic roots. Yet for the general brightness or dulness to himself of an existence equipped with asteroids, algebra, and such luxuries, each human entity is responsible. It does not take deep philosophy to know that life for the majority is a looking-glass: one laughs into it and it laughs back—and vice versa.

So Honor Carr, starting a bit weak, a bit friendless, from the hospital at the foot of the hill of living, glanced up the ascent; found it looking steep and slippery; gasped; then remembered certain formulated resolves, certain inspirations, the clasp of a hand out of a twilight, the tenacity of a life serving

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others beyond death. She called up the resolves and placed them in a row before her. She, too, would be in her sort helpful, courageous, tenacious. Health, the magic solvent, which is taken for granted until it is lost, which is longed for with bitter longing afterward, had been given back by a miracle. She would weave that miracle into her days, guarding the health, serving whomever she might with the best that was in her.

And behold, as she climbed, the road of life was a hill no longer, but stretched across level meadows, wandered in pleasant places! Hills do such things at times when negotiated with spirit. Some one was walking with her whose presence made her light-footed in the heaviest going.

In other words, Honor Carr, having made up her mind to be well, happy, and hard-working, taught school with great success; met after five years the only man in the world, according to her judgment; fell in love with, and married him. Thenceforward, like the happy nations, she had little history.

There was a boy who filled the house with laughter and bother and playmates in squads; a boy of

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muddy boots and spilled ink-bottles and scratched furniture and torn clothes; a boy of sure loyalties, of sudden gusts of affection, of unexpected gentle words and of shy tenderness when one was alone with him in the firelight; a boy like other boys in fact. This boy satisfied the soul of his mother from end to end; and up to the time he was ten years old, being a healthy young animal, had given her no anxious moments.

At that time she took him with her proudly to exhibit him to those concerned in the city where she had lived and worked a long time ago—the city of the hospital. Then, like a bolt from the blue, suddenly the boy was ill!

The doctors turned her from the room and she sat on the stairs by the door and waited. Old buried agonies and sick despairs lifted heads from their graves and took her soul in their claws and twisted it. The boy—her little, noisy boy—lying there suffering, quiet! Then when a week, as it seemed, had passed the surgeon came out of the room and looked down at her.

“We must take him to the hospital,” he said.

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"There must be an operation, and it should be quickly." Then compassionately: "Try not to worry. He may pull through."

She said that over to herself as if trying to get the meaning into her brain. "'He may pull through,'" she whispered, and then said aloud: "May—may pull through—may!" She could not force herself to grasp what the world would be like if the slender thread of that "may" should snap. Three days ago they had travelled here together, she and the boy. Yesterday she had him, all of him—his fearless eyes and his bright hair and his clear, wondering voice; his strong little body; his whole heart—all hers yesterday. To-day she had a word of three letters—"may!"

She was not of the sort that goes to pieces in a crisis; she sat quietly in the hospital drawing-room and waited. The boy's father was on the cars, coming; but he could not get there until ten in the evening. She remembered, of course, the months she had spent in this place. She thought of the stream and the voices, and got up and closed the window so she could not hear them. They were horrible to her.

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Vaguely she thought of the visitor who had come to her here and given her new life. What was it worth if— She shrank back on the threshold of that thought. The grateful memory that had been an inspiration to her always faded in the glare of this conflagration. She barely remembered at this moment the dramatic change that had come to her individually here.

What did anything count that had to do with life before the boy's life? The only interest on earth for her was in that well-lighted bare room where the slender figure lay unconscious on a table, so little, so helpless, amidst white-clothed surgeons, business-like, ghastly in their snowy freshness. The woman's imagination halted, sick, shivering. She had trouble just then to keep her hands quiet, to prevent them from beating insanely on the stone window-sill.

A uniformed nurse slipped in. "Doctor Morgan wishes me to tell you," she said, "that the operation is over and that—he is as well as could be expected."

She sat petrified and stared at the nurse. The boy who two days ago dashed from the top of the

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house to the bottom like a whirlwind! That was the best message they could send. She rose.

"Where is he?" she asked.

The nurse laid a detaining hand on her arm.

"I'm afraid you mustn't go to him. They are taking him to his room. The moment the doctor says——"

"I want to stand in the hall outside his room," the boy's mother interrupted.

"Yes," the nurse said. "Yes; come." The nurse showed her the door and placed her far down the hall. "The very moment," she said, and left her to keep watch.

There was a hushed excitement around the door. One or two doctors, one or two nurses, went in and out. She saw the nurse who had come to her speaking to Doctor Morgan. She saw him glance down the passage to her and nod understandingly. Then she saw a hospital attendant roll out a car and she knew the boy had been carried on it from the operating-room. The attendant passed her with it, his head bent, not looking at her. Yet she knew that he knew she was the boy's mother. Doctor Morgan came for a moment and spoke to her.

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"You may have to wait a long time," he said gently. "I don't want you to be there when he becomes conscious. It might excite him, and the least excitement might—hurt him. He will be better without you at first. It is a question of his strength to rally. We are doing everything that science knows; and I want him to be quiet for a while after consciousness returns. At the first safe moment you shall see him; but it may be a long time. Will you go to a room and rest?"

Honor smiled.

"I will stay here," she said.

The nurse brought a chair, tried to do things for her, made her drink a little wine. She took the wine—a mouthful of it; she sat down in the chair. Then she sent the nurse away and was at once on her feet again, her face always to the boy's door. She knew every moment who was in that room which was denied to her. She saw the two nurses steal in and out; saw one of them at length go away. She was aware that the young doctor with light hair had not come out at all. She knew when it was time for Doctor Morgan's quiet step at the corner of the corridor. She watched him hungrily as he turned the

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door-knob every half-hour and crept into the boy's room.

The half-hours passed, marked off by those visits, until a moment came when he turned toward her instead of away as he came out. Her heart pumped in agony. Her knees wavered and she fell into the chair almost unable to face him. Yet the message he brought was neither life nor death.

"He is awake," Doctor Morgan said, "but very weak. It is a question of his strength. You must not see him yet. Be patient a little longer."

The nurse came with beef-tea. She could not even pretend to take it now, and the nurse went away with the full cup. She saw the young doctor with light hair come out as Doctor Morgan repassed the door, and then join him and walk down the hall with him, talking earnestly.

Then shortly the other nurse—the one left in the boy's room—appeared at the door, glanced back into the room, and then hurriedly slipped out and vanished also down the long corridor.

He was alone. She took an eager step forward. How could she hurt her own boy? He would be

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longing for her—she must go to him! There is an instinct above the rules of doctors. She started, rushed headlong for half a dozen steps, then turned and crawled to her chair. She had put his life into the doctors' hands. She had no right to do anything except obey orders. But she was devoured now with a sharp uneasiness. Why had the nurse left him alone? There was some mistake, some negligence, it might be; and the boy's life was hanging in the balance. Feverishly she gazed this way and that down the long, empty, silent corridors. There was no one in sight anywhere.

With that the door of the room opened, to her amazement, and some one came out. It was not the light-haired young doctor; moreover he had gone with Doctor Morgan ten minutes before. It was growing twilight now; a moment ago the watch on her wrist had said six o'clock. The long halls were dusky; she could not see so distinctly as a few minutes back.

This flashed through her mind as she stood anxiously and watched the man who came out of the boy's room—who turned and closed the door very

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softly. He wheeled and swung with alert, noiseless step toward her. She stared as he came swiftly along; her pulse was jumping with an odd excitement. There was something strange, something familiar in the man's figure, in the light, effortless movements.

With that he was close to her. He was looking at her out of calm, wide gray eyes; and as she stared—leaning forward, her lips parted, her breath a sob, her strained gaze devouring this face, this figure which she knew now—suddenly he smiled. In the sunlight of that smile was the boy's life. Her arms stretched as one might stretch arms before an altar in utter thanksgiving; she turned as he passed, for the rapid step never halted. He was not there! The long corridor was empty, silent. Then she fell into the chair, unconscious.

It was the light-haired young doctor, who was new in the hospital, who stood over her as she opened her eyes.

"Now this won't do," he protested cheerfully. "You're a perfect soldier through all the bad part; and the second the boy is better and howling for you, here you go off in a faint."

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"I'm not fainting; I'm well. I'm going to him!"
She was on her feet.

"That's the way to talk." The young doctor patted her fatherly on the shoulder. "Swallow this first." And she dutifully swallowed.

"He's a lot better, you know. A bit light-headed maybe—been dreaming, and thinks it's real; but his strength has come back remarkably. Pulse good; almost no temperature. Never saw anything so sudden!"

"I know," said the boy's mother, and stepped through the doorway she had watched so long.

The little, beloved face on the pillow met hers with a smile that almost broke her heart in two for joy; but she kissed him as quietly as if he had just come from school instead of from the jaws of death.

"Mother," the boy spoke eagerly, "the funniest thing—a different doctor came. Not these—they're bully; but he was different. And he took my two hands, and it felt queer but nice; and I seemed to get better right off. Mother, I'm going to get well."

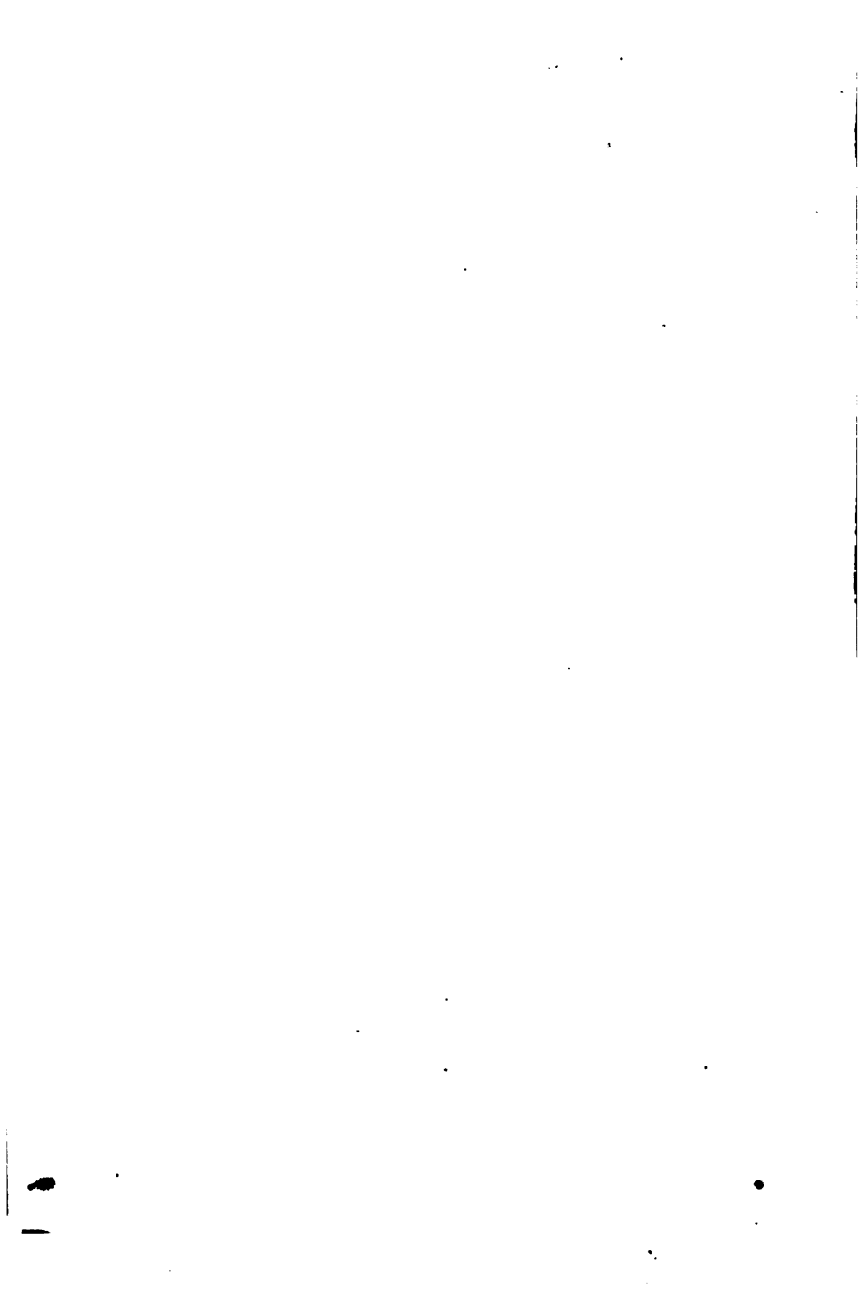
"Hush, darling; you mustn't talk. Yes; you're going to get well."

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A hand was laid on her shoulder. She looked up and met the eyes of the man whose child had died.

"God bless you both," said Doctor Morgan.
"He is going to get well. He has seen The Healer!"

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IT was the morning of the crime. The rustling of the leaves of the maple-trees over the driveway was like the sound of the sea; their shadows, clean and green with the greenness of May, ran silently forward and then silently withdrew across the thick tonsure of the lawn; purple and white lilacs lay in sunlit masses down by the road. A big snowball-bush lifted a thousand heavy white spheres, and to the mind of the murderer, as yet unstained with blood-guiltiness, a thousand tiny bells rang dimly as they dropped their soft weights again. The murderer sat alone on the broad front steps, and the crispness of her pink skirts flowed in a straight line from her waist to three times her width; legs and russet sandals stood out primly below. She was in a deep revery, and the leaves and their waving shadows, the lilacs, the snowball-bells, had gone with her into a world where imaginative children spend more hours than grown-ups know. She had withdrawn

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herself into the Enchanted Forest—the still citadel where only the young, of whatever age, may go; about her was a world of wonders, as vividly real to the fresh, unwritten brain as the material world she found so new and astonishing day by day.

There, in the forest, were fairies and hobgoblins and creatures of secret, marvellous qualities, which only she herself knew. There lived the gentle Taladma, of the size of three houses, soft-hearted and sensitive, each of whose ready tears filled a bucket; there were the Kleewalliks, with the bubbling hot brains, from which one must lift the cover often to let them cool, else they boiled over and were reduced to idiocy; there played the bewitching Whangdoodle Pup, who wore overshoes, and an American flag always on his tail, and who did the most unexpected, amusing things; there reigned Renard, the dear red fox who barked in French, the prince, the leader, the lovable, the centre of every story. It was necessary only to be left alone where it was still, and the pink-frocked figure which bore the semblance of an ordinary little girl had entered into a kingdom such as this.

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There was a clang and a jar far away—the gate leading to the stable had shut heavily, and to the dreamer it was as if fairy-land were shaken. Something dark and mysterious was happening. What was that the new nurse, Anna, who had come lately to help her own old Sarah—what was it that she had told her this morning?

“Put away your needle indeed!” Anna had said indignantly. “A nice place to put away a needle with the point sticking out of your dolly’s shoulder, so when I takes her up I plunges me thumb in, a inch deep. S’posin’ I’d ’a’ put me head down and stuck it in me eye—s’posin’ that, just!”

“What would that do to you, Anna?” demanded the child’s awed voice.

“Do to me, is it? It’d ’a’ blinded me, that’s all; or it might ’a’ kilt me, and then youse would ’a’ been hung for murder, maybe,” Anna wandered on, as she buttoned the pink frock, letting her imagination play.

“Hung for murder—what does that mean, Anna?” the soft little tones asked, fascinated, horrified at she knew not what.

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Anna was cross this morning, and it gave her pleasure to explain. "Mean, then? Means when youse kills somebody youse is a murderer, and the judge catches youse and youse gets a rope tied around the neck, and they hangs youse by it till youse be dead."

There were no more questions for Anna to answer; she had given food for reflection in plenty to the young imagination—food of a new sort. The child was silent through breakfast, and no one knew that she was planning, half in shivering repulsion, half in gloating interest, what a "judge" was and how he might tie a rope around her baby throat. But the ugly thought had melted into the delight of the spring morning when she came out of doors, and now, as she sat alone, dreaming her accustomed hidden dreams, it was only recalled by the sudden bang of the gate across the lawn.

"Might a gentleman join this hen party?" a voice inquired, and the Enchanted Forest and its denizens were gone in a breath.

Uncle Nigel! The two words expressed to the mind of the sightseer all that there was of best in

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human society. The depth and height of a little girl's adoration for a big brother are only known by those who have been little girls, and who have never, however changed in outward ways, quite gotten over it. The pink-frocked child, having no big brother, lavished an ocean of devotion, mostly silent, on the student uncle. Had the President of these United States, the King of England, the monarchs of Europe and Asia, joined in beseeching her to come one way that they might load her with distinguished honors, and had Uncle Nigel stood, tall and smiling, as she loved him, across the road, and suggested that she should take a walk with him, a doubt as to choice would not have entered her mind. At six one is whole-souled, and the overflowing affection of the whole soul of her belonged to Uncle Nigel. He sat down by her and put his arm carelessly about her, and she thrilled, but so reserved a mechanism is a child that she did not even smile.

"What are you doing here all alone, Skeesicks? Where are your dollies? And what makes you look so excited? Your face is as red as a lobster."

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Uncle Nigel, pulling absent-mindedly at the thick, cropped hair which fell like a short, gold curtain about her head, suddenly stopped, and, looking up from the rapture of his touch, she saw him staring down the lawn, down toward the stable. The child's gaze was caught there too, with instant interest, for in the deep grass about the building moved slowly, casually, stopping from time to time, a light top wagon and, apparently, nothing else.

"What the dickens!" demanded the boy.

"Maybe it's fairies," a small excited voice at his side suggested, and the great chap laughed easily, with the age-wide superiority of eighteen over six.

"Come on, Skeesicks, and we'll hunt the fairies to earth," he said, and the small hand slipped into the large one blissfully, and off they went, big boy and little girl, in the radiant spring morning, over the velvet lawn, past the fragrance of the lilacs, through the gate that clanged after them, and into the knee-deep grass of the paddock.

Nigel stopped and pointed and laughed. They had a view of the other side of the mysterious wagon

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now, and before it a small calico horse, white and red—a pony by rights—buried to the girths in greenness, plunged her head still deeper in horse ambrosia, and munched and browsed earnestly, and strayed here and there as the spirit moved her, regardless of the carriage harnessed behind, straying, too, as she went.

“By Jove! Somebody’s horse has got loose!” The boy, swinging through the tall grass, caught the rein, with a friendly pat of reassurance on the bent stretch of red-spotted neck.

A small clean-cut head lifted, and intelligent full eyes—eyes that were given a strangely piquant expression by their thick white lashes—regarded him with calm dignity. “Good morning, sir,” they seemed to say quietly. “Is it quite etiquette to interrupt a friend by force at breakfast?”

“I beg your pardon.” The young man spoke as if answering a gentle reproof. “But you oughtn’t to be wandering about here alone this way, ought you?” He loosed the rein, and for answer the pony dipped her head deep again in grass.

There was a shout from the stable door, and, turn-

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ing, they saw a big man in shirt-sleeves, who gesticulated.

"She's all right!" he called. "All right! It's Kitty!"

"Oh!" the boy murmured. "If it's Kitty, of course, that makes a difference. I wonder who Kitty is?"

"I know! I know!" the child proclaimed in agitation. "Masters tolded me. It's Kitty what's Doctor Fell's horse—she's a trick pony. Masters tolded me she knew just as much as a damn white person."

"Did Masters say that to you?"

"Yes, Uncle Nigel; but he said he begged my pardon, miss, for the damn, but I tolded him not to mind, so he didn't. And Kitty—come on, Uncle Nigel, let's go and see Doctor Fell." And eighty pounds dragged one hundred and sixty over the ground resolutely.

"Who's Doctor Fell?"

"Why, the horse-dentist, Uncle Nigel. Didn't you know?" She stopped and stared in surprise. She had had the impression, given sometimes by

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college students, that he knew everything. "He scrapes down their toofies when they gets long and sharp," she explained further. An investigating hand was inserted tentatively between her own lips. "Mine doesn't do 'at way—I wonder why?"

"Oh, well, I dare say he'll scrape you down a bit—I'll ask him," Uncle Nigel remarked encouragingly. "It'll do your toofies good." And then reflected aloud: "It was that wagon I saw drive in as I came over—banged the gate behind him with the dickens of a row."

The stable door was wide open, and a healthful, horsey smell mingled with the May breezes. The two halted hand in hand and stared silently. A large old man, of six feet two or more, stood in front of Nancy, the skittish saddle-horse, whom Masters held by the halter close to her head. A great gloved hand and a hairy forearm were thrust far up the horse's mouth, a file was going with excruciating steadiness, and the black muzzle twitched and the dark eyes rolled to this side and that in nervous protest. Doctor Fell was talking steadily—talking solely, evidently, to Nancy.

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"There! there!" he murmured soothingly. "Poppa wouldn't hurt you—poppa's just going to fix your teeth nice so they won't bother. Be a good girl and let poppa—" and at this point Nancy gave a mad plunge, out of all patience with the human race. Doctor Fell patted the tortured brown head gently. "Why, you mustn't do that," he remonstrated, speaking low, as men who know horses learn to speak. "You'll scare poppa! My! my! how you scared me!"

The two shadows in the doorway met his eye, and he turned a big, round, friendly face, with protruding, gentle eyes, toward them.

"Good morning," he said cordially. "Good morning, madam; good morning, sir."

The word "madam" seemed to its pink-frocked object one of the pleasantest and most appropriate designations ever applied. How well it would be if father, for instance, would call her "madam" in that sensible way, instead of "baby," as was his trying custom. Even "Skeesicks"—Uncle Nigel, looking down from the corner of his eye, saw the small person bristle with grave and satisfied dignity.

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"Good mornin', Doctor Fell," the soft voice answered, with ready civility. "We saw your nice trick pony munchin' grass with the carriage tied on."

"Did you indeed, madam?" and the doctor regarded her with flattering interest. "And did Kitty shake hands with you by chance?"

"No—can she shake hands?" The wide-eyed astonishment flattered the doctor in turn.

"Shake hands!" he repeated, as one who should say, "Can I walk!" "Shake hands! Kitty! I'm surprised, indeed, that she failed so to do. That ain't like Kitty—she's liable to be polite to the ladies." And again a glow of pleasure at being included in that stately "ladies," at this appreciation of her sterling qualities, warmed the intercostal spaces beneath the pink gingham. "I will show you," said Doctor Fell, and laid down his file, and drew off the wet, chewed gloves, and wiped his hands carefully. His manner of saying and doing things was impressive, and the young man as well as the child followed him, fascinated, as he stepped, limping—for the doctor was a veteran of the Civil

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War—from the stable and into the breeze-tossed grass.

The little calico horse lifted her trim head at his step before he spoke, and gazed at him, as if weighing the possible reasons of his coming, from her bright, queer eyes.

"Kitty, I'm astounded that you ain't shook hands properly with this lady," he addressed her, in quiet tones full of reproach. "Tut, tut! That ain't the way for a polite horse to act, taking advantage of me to forget your manners the minute my back is turned."

The horse blinked her white lashes at him meekly, as if condoning her fault.

"Well, then, put up your fist and shake hands with the madam, pretty"—and a slim fore leg doubled patiently, and the child reached in solemn ecstasy and grasped it with her fingers. "Now with the gentleman, surely," and Kitty and Nigel saluted each other. Doctor Fell's broad, gentle face beamed with pride, and he patted a red splash on the white head tenderly. "Now, Kitty, make a bow for the madam—two bows—give a lady two bows always,

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Kitty," and the spirited, obstinate little head bobbed up and down in air twice, with as much devil-may-care defiance, to say the least, as civility in the greeting.

Fifteen minutes later, after more performances, after anecdotes told in a quaint mixture of primness and bad grammar, alive with the charm of the old man's deep-channelled, unconscious originality, the séance was ended, and the pink frock and the tall figure in tennis clothes found themselves strolling back together again across the lawn.

"I do not love thee, Doctor Fell;
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this one thing I know full well—
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,"

Nigel remarked, casually, as they went.

"I'm sorry you don't, Uncle Nigel, but I have to love him quite much because he's so pleasant to Kitty and because he calls me madams and ladies."

There was lunch cooking as the pink frock went past the kitchen and up the back stairway to the nursery. The suggestion of steak and baked potatoes was not an unpleasant one, but the material thought

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was swamped in a supreme joy when she came to the room where the young Alexander, her small brother of four months, held sway. This was one of her enthusiasms, almost the greatest, this remarkable living doll which she was allowed sometimes, as the highest of honors, to hold in her arms. When Anna, left in charge, suggested a plan she caught at it eagerly.

"Would youse like to hold the baby, careful, while I runs down to see me cousin a minute? Sure I won't be gon' long," said Anna, and the child's voice trembled with pleasure as she agreed.

It was very still in the airy nursery. Her mother had gone to the city; her father was, of course, at business; Uncle Nigel had disappeared into the big place next door, his home; only the servants and the two children were in the house, and old Sarah, the head nurse, was busy in her mother's room far down the hallway, putting away basketfuls of clean clothes. The nurse *pro tem.* was enthroned in a high-backed rocking-chair; her pink skirts stood out straight from it; her tan feet dangled, toes in. The heavy baby she held stopped the circulation in

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her arms, made her extremely uncomfortable—but what was comfort to bliss? It was bliss untold to feel the warm, helpless weight over her shoulder, the infinitely soft, tiny face against her own. As she rocked she sang:

“Wock-a-bye baby, in the twee top.”

She crooned over and over—it was all the song she knew; and as she sang she rocked harder, more enthusiastically. The baby was sound, sound asleep, and a sense of responsibility, of importance, grew. With her whole might would she fulfil this duty, this honor thrust upon her. If singing and rocking would do it, she would keep the baby asleep, cost what it might. She sang more breathlessly, she rocked harder, her toes barely touching the floor as she gave each impulse to the chair. The chair raced forward and back ever at more frantic speed. Finally, at the very crest of action, she felt suddenly a concussion, a jar of the small head in her neck. As quickly as might be she stopped the movement, and carefully, anxiously, swung the baby about until he lay in her lap.

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The little girl's eyes dilated with horror; she gasped, shook all over with awful fear, for the wee face in her lap was spotted with a drop of blood. That the infant Alexander was still drawing the steady breath of peaceful sleep she did not notice; that she had merely bumped his nose and made it bleed she did not imagine; to her he was dead, done to death at his sister's hands. Once again Anna's words of the morning, opening a vista into unknown terrors, flashed to her mind. A murderer! She had killed the baby—she was a murderer! The awful judge would come shortly and tie a rope about her neck and hang her. Every instinct of her keenly alive soul and body rose in rebellion, and the good stout stuff of which she was made prompted her instantly to fight her fate. She must escape before the judge should come; she must leave her home, run away.

With trembling care she rose and laid the blood-stained corpse—now snoring heartily—in the crib, and kissed its forehead, damp and warm with perspiration, with quivering lips. Then she looked about her, and a large tear dropped silently on either

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round cheek. She must leave this dear place that she loved, and father and mother and Sarah and—she sobbed—and Uncle Nigel. Her eyes fell on her doll's trunk—a box eighteen inches long by twelve high. People always took trunks on a journey; she must of course do the same, and this was the very thing. Hurriedly she went to work to pack it.

A small nightgown went in first, then a silver brush and comb—the gift of Uncle Nigel—then, rolled together, a battered doll and a broad sash of pink ribbon, calculated to be of particular service to an escaping criminal. Then she considered. She must have at least a few relics of home, of the dear ones left behind, to remember them by in the years to come. A pair of Sarah's old shoes took the next place. A photograph of her mother stood, in a massive silver frame, on the dressing-table—that added its weight to the trunk. As for Alexander, the dear deceased, she sobbed once loudly as she crammed down with difficulty his largest woolly lamb. She could see nothing of her father's in evidence at the moment, but decided to abstract his riding-crop as she went through the hall down-

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stairs. There was Anna, of whom as yet she had no memorial. She hesitated a moment, for it seemed to her vaguely that it was Anna who had caused this upheaval of home and happiness; but the small torn soul would be at peace with all of her world—even Anna she would remember affectionately. Anna's best hat—a stately structure of ribbon and flowers—lay on the table. The little girl folded it together as tightly as her muscle would allow, and plugged the interstices of the woolly lamb with it. Then she searched in her own chest of drawers to see if there was anything left which might be useful in her future life as a murderer, and selected a pair of white kid gloves and a jew's-harp.

She embowered herself, as a last rite, in the flapping, flower-loaded frame of her best hat, on whose wide brim the poppy and the daisy and the corn-flower and the buttercup and a few grasses vied for mastery—a typical little girl's hat—and as the broad white elastic creased her fat chin, the sorrowful face it confined bloomed as yet another flower.

So, carrying the trunk in her arms, she passed

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for the last time through the hall of her home, her mind bent now not on the traditional farewell glances, but on the possibility of reaching her father's crop, the one souvenir needed to complete her collection. It was accomplished, and with that slippery addition to her load she was off.

The place was on the very edge of the country; there was a small back gate which led through a shady lane into a highway, and this was an exit in the spirit of her adventure. There was no one in sight, and she trotted down the glare of the sunny road bravely, though at times she was forced to lay down the doll's trunk to rest her aching fist and to get a fresh and stronger hold of it.

Half a mile slipped by not unpleasantly. In spite of deathless regret, in spite of the nameless dread of the judge, there was quite an exhilaration in running away. Who knew but she might find the Enchanted Forest, and the gentle, large Taladma, and Renard, and the Fairy of the Himalayas, who would settle all her future in a wink?

Up the field, in the shade of a big maple close by a blossoming thorn-bush, she sat down to rest; and

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as she sat, not yet tired enough to have lost the pleasant sense of excitement in adventure, her eyes wandered half a mile back to the main road, and she saw figures. Then the horror of a hunted thing came upon her. They were on her trail; they would catch her and deliver her to the judge, who would hang her by the neck until— Ah! A shiver of terror shook her from head to foot at the thought of a hand on her throat, and then the big will braced the little muscles.

She staggered along between fence and bushes over the uneven ground as rapidly as might be toward the woods. It was desperately hard work scrambling over the rough ground; brambles scratched delicate hands, stones bruised soft feet, and often she fell, but held always the precious irksomeness of the doll's trunk clasped to her panting heart. So, plunging along in a mad haste of fear, through, it seemed, uncounted dozens of miles, she gained peace, for suddenly the fatherly branches of trees stretched undemonstrative strong arms, as is the fatherly way, about her. The terrified, battered little lump of humanity felt instantly com-

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forted in the power and gentleness of the woods, and at full length on the ground, with her dirty face pushed regardless into the mould of mother earth's brown skin, with the beloved burden laid aside for the first time, she sobbed her heart out gaspingly, and felt better. Never in her guarded short life had she been bruised and exhausted and roasted and frightened before. There was the hurt of injured dignity topping physical sorrows, and to crown even that, she had had no lunch. What hunger was she had not before known, and she did not recognize it in this unloved, abused sense of lonely wrong, but it played its part. Yet—listen! The branches were whispering about her; she could almost catch words of charmed meaning; there were light sounds on the earth; a twig snapped gently.

She sat up very carefully and clasped her scratched knees in her arms, and forgot life's tragedy as she stared with round eyes, her lips parted, her hearing strained for a sign of the wonderful beings who were probably at this moment close about her, for this surely must be the Enchanted Forest. A long time she sat so, motionless, hugging her knees,

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listening and gazing, until at length the constraint wearied her, and she rose with a patient sigh.

"I'm here," she announced, timidly, to whom it might concern. And the little voice stabbing the still air startled her.

Suddenly she was afraid of the great quiet of the waving branches, almost of these dear friends of hers who moved so mysteriously behind whispering screens of leaves, who would not meet her as she wished to meet them, in a frank and open spirit. Hurriedly, as the feeling seized her, she lifted the trunk, and stepping cautiously, as if not to disturb the unseen, inhospitable citizens of this silent place, she slipped away. Into deeper shadows at first, then, by degrees, into a growth of smaller trees, and then, from an open meadow, back once more to the road.

She trudged along, but looking back often to see if the forces of the law were on her trail. And, behold, there they were! The little figure close against the fence was not conspicuous, and she saw the bunch of people before they saw her. Under the fence she rolled, into the deep grass of the meadow,

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and stowed the trunk by a bush and lay quiet, staring and breathing hard. Soon she heard voices—two wagons stopped close by her, and her pumping heart gave an extra jump as she distinguished Uncle Nigel's boyish, deep tones. Uncle Nigel! To think that her best beloved should be hunting her to her death; her mouth quivered, and a long blowing grass tickled the trembling lip, and she sneezed. But her father's big voice drowned the sound.

"Nigel!" he called, "I'll take the right at this turning, and you can go on up the Greenville Road for about a mile more. She can't have gone farther than that. If we don't find her by six, we had better meet at home and"—the murderer did not know that her father choked here—"and I'll see again if there are any traces near Dunstable's Pond."

The meaning of that, the agony of anxiety, did not at all reach the small person in ambush who listened, but she knew that they were going up the two roads whose parting was close beyond. She waited until they were out of hearing, and then she crept forth and took up her weary way, tired,

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spiritless, hungry, but yet with dogged determination left. On and on she trudged, too tired to think or care much what the end of this weary escape might be, and twice the trunk fell from her weakening grasp and scattered the plunder, and she cried a little as she repacked. Finally she sat down on it, with her back against a tree.

"I think perhaps I'd rather be hanged," she considered.

But a thickening dust rose in the distance, and she slipped swiftly behind a big rock—a farmer's vehicle, a possible emissary of justice, and the love of life in her proved still active. Twilight came over purpling hills as she dragged her feet across a field, for now and then she had left the roads by caprice, by a sudden fancy for the grassy stretches, and it was this lack of design in her itinerary which had foiled her pursuers. Utterly worn out, she lay down at the farther edge of the ten-acre lot and fell fast asleep, and might so have slept until morning had not the clean, quick trot of a horse, the rolling of light wheels, awakened her.

She sat up bewildered, calling "Anna" at the

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top of her lungs. The wheels stopped, there was silence for a moment, but no further sound came, and the horse started off smartly.

The murderer stood up and watched. It was night, perhaps eight o'clock of a May evening; she could see the dark bulk flying up the road; she saw it turn in, about a quarter of a mile beyond, and then a light shone out, and its beams meant humanity. She could not lead this lonely, hunted life longer—it seemed years she had been at it. The light would lead her into the hands of law and justice, but also into the hands of her mother and father. Perhaps, it might be barely possible, they would forgive her, would somehow save her from the judge. At all events, it would be pleasant to have supper and to be undressed and go to bed, and if they hanged her in the morning—well, that would not be till morning.

A big man was walking about the stable from which the light had flashed, carrying his lantern here and there with a halting step as he unharnessed and cared for his horse—a small calico horse, white and red. Out of the black shadows which lay sharply

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against orange lights came a voice, weak and small, which startled the man into stillness.

"Please take me home and let them hang me," the voice said, and the man turned and stared, bewildered.

From the outer darkness crept a figure and stopped. The yellow beams swung, and shone on a limp and soiled pink frock, on white socks torn and hanging, on a face where dirt and tears had mixed freely, on thick gold hair in wild disorder. Projecting into the foreground a large doll's trunk caught the eye, from whose mouth issued abruptly what seemed the leg of an animal. It took Doctor Fell a long minute to recognize the apparition. Then he set down the lantern swiftly.

"Why, it's the madam!" he cried. "What in the world are you doing here, my lady?" And healing was in the voice and in the words.

"Oh, Doctor Fell!" the murderer exclaimed, joyfully, and dropped the trunk, and never cared that the woolly lamb and its mates went bounding over the stable floor, and found herself weeping miserably, joyfully, on the doctor's broad shoulder,

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while his voice repeated over and over, as he patted her back: "There! there now! There, there, now!" There was little variety to the remark, but it satisfied her.

After that came a hazy dream, from which issued, in her memory, certain salient points. First she saw as in a vision the wonderful Kitty hastily unharnessed and given a drink, and then she felt herself lifted up, far up in massive arms, and carried, a broken reed, a willing baby, into the house. There Doctor Fell, an old bachelor, living alone, lighted lamps, cooked, set before her, as if before a queen, a royal meal in less, as she remembered it, than five minutes. And while he cooked, and while she ate, he entertained her with stories of Kitty, and in the happiness of steak and potatoes and cool milk her courage came back in a flood, and the contraband feeling of the occasion gave that delicious flavor to the meal which only a sense of the contraband can give, and dimples played on the small grimy face and laughter bubbled up light-heartedly.

"So you see, madam," the doctor explained confidentially, as horseman to horseman, "they couldn't

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none of them do nothing, nowise, with Kitty. Every particular time they would harness her, down she would lay in the harness, and beatin' wouldn't budge her. You'd be surprised, madam, how they beat that little horse. It was wrong; it was very wrong. But I'd had my eye on her, and I'd made up my mind she warn't bad, only she were a nervous girl and high-spirited, and beatin' warn't no good. Anyways, I was obliged to get her out of them men's hands. So I paid sixty-five dollars down—consider that, madam—only sixty-five dollars for Kitty."

"That was awfully cheap," the little sleepy voice responded, with the air of a connoisseur in horses.

"Cheap! I believe you!" and the doctor shook his head sidewise solemnly, and the murderer shook hers sidewise too. "So," he continued, "I bought her—for sixty-five dollars—remember that."

"I will," the murderer promised earnestly, arresting a batch of fried potatoes on its way to her open mouth.

"And then—what next?"

The murderer felt that she ought to know, but she didn't. She humbly waited.

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"To drive her—that was the proposition—and you'll say it was a large one, will you not, madam?"

"Yes, I will," assented the murderer eagerly; that was easy.

"Well, then, I says to Kitty—explaining to her after a manner, do you see?—I says, 'Kitty, my lady, poppa ain't going to hurt you the least mite, so now don't you be rambunctious and scare poppa into fits; just be harnessed quiet and pleasant, like a good girl,'—and what do you think happened?"

"She didn't scare you into fits," ventured the little girl, entranced with this constant appeal to her intelligence.

"*Ex-actly*—exactly what Kitty didn't do," and the old man slapped the table so that the fried potatoes jumped, and a deep sense of satisfaction permeated the murderer. "I see you understand Kitty. Well, I harnessed her and I gets into the phaeton, quiet and ca'm, and I says, says I, 'Get up.' And what do you think Kitty did?"

"She got up," answered the murderer confidently—too confidently.

"No," said the doctor gravely, shaking his great

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head again—"no; you're wrong." But his manner of saying it was almost as flattering as his former agreement. It was equal taking issue with equal on a great question. "You're wrong there, madam. Kitty stood still. What's more, she laid her ears back. Did you ever see Kitty lay her ears back, madam?"

"I—I think not, but I'd like to," the little voice answered.

"It's a sight," said the doctor, "a remarkable sight. They have a world of meaning, have Kitty's ears. Well, she wagged them ears back at me, as if she was saying, in plain English, 'Until you fix what's wrong I don't stir a step!' That's what she said, plain as talking. So I looks around, naturally, to see what's wrong. And I see the whip setting in the socket, just where them bright eyes o' Kitty's could spy it. So out I gets and takes the whip, in an ostentatious manner of doing it, and lays it one side on the floor. Then in I gets again, and picks up the reins, and out goes Kitty as sweet as a May morning; and from that day to this, madam, if you'll believe it, not a mite of trouble have I ever had with that horse—that horse which had the reputation to be

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the worst-tempered animal in the country. A wonderful beast she is, a wonderful beast—if a beast, which I sometimes doubt.”

A wanderer stopping to gaze in at the window of the small house would have lingered to see, on either side of a white-spread, lamplighted table, a pretty child whose dirt-streaked features beamed with happiness, and a large, kindly old man whose broad face and prominent pale eyes shone with no less of pleasure.

To the flowing accompaniment of the doctor's conversation a mountain of beefsteak and potatoes had disappeared, and, fed and warmed, and happy in this delightful social function, the murderer lifted innocent eyes in surprise to see him suddenly get up.

“And now,” he said in the pleasant, gentle tones which children and animals loved and trusted—“now if the madam has had a sufficiency of everything, I rather guess Kitty and I had better take her home. I rather guess mamma and poppa'll be worrying a mite when they don't know where little girls be this time o' night.”

At the words a pitiless horizon closed once more

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upon the fugitive. The glow faded from the happy, dirty face, and her mouth worked. "Couldn't I stay here?" she suggested piteously. "I'd sleep with Kitty if there wasn't room in this house. I—I don't want to be ha-anged."

With a world of delicate patience he drew the story from her—the story of the crime—and very quietly when it was told he reassured her. "Why, madam, do you know, I think you're wrong," he reasoned. "I think you ain't used your customary good judgment to run away before you knew you was a murderer. My opinion is, if you ask it, that you ain't never killed Alexander yet. As I sense the affair, you bumped his nose and gave him a good, smart nosebleed, and that's all. I'd be willing to warrant it, madam—I'd be willing to warrant that there baby's been bouncing about, crowing, all this live-long afternoon you've been running away. Tut—tut! never cry now, the plucky little lady that you are—tut—tut! There now, leave your head lay, and no judge nor nothing shan't get you while I'm alive." And, her tumbled hair against the mighty shoulders which smelled undeniably of the stable,

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she let the big arms fold about her, and sobbed comfortably.

It needed but a little more gentle reasoning to persuade her to return, and, so sleepy that she could hardly stagger, it was yet rapture and excitement to go out hand in hand with the doctor to the dark stable and help seriously and responsibly to harness. The doll's trunk was, with a right sense of its dignity, roped on behind. It was a regal moment when she was tucked into the phaeton, wrapped in a carriage-rug, and Doctor Fell, getting in beside her, lifted the reins and started the great and only Kitty down the road for her—the murderer's—journey to her own again. The doctor's cheerful voice kept steadily on as Kitty's quick feet rang musically.

"You ain't going to sleep, be you, madam?" he asked a trifle anxiously. "Better not drop off till we get you home now—might ketch cold," and he shifted the reins to one hand, and slipped his great arm tenderly around the slim bundle in the rug. "So many little gals in the world," he meditated, in an absent-minded way; "seems a pity I couldn't have one."

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Far down the black road a light flashed, was gone, had come again. Soon there was the distant sound of wheels and rapid hoof-beats.

"If I don't mistake the situation, that there is a search-party looking for the most val'able little girl on earth," remarked Doctor Fell, and the theory proved tenable. It was, in fact, the central one of a dozen search-parties then out. Doctor Fell hailed the light an eighth of a mile away, and the voice that answered him was shrill with anxiety—the voice of the murderer's father.

"I've got her—she's all right," the big man's big notes boomed out on the night, and the two—Nigel was also in the wagon—knew, at those words of beatitude, for one reeling moment, what it might be to faint from joy.

A lonely man that night, as he limped about his stable and carefully fed and put to bed the small horse that was all of his family, went over and over again an episode which occurred when the child's father, grim with thankfulness, came to lift her from the phaeton. As she realized, out of the borderland of a swimming world of sleep, that she was being taken from the friend of her adversity, her

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arms flashed out of the mummylike rug swathings and Doctor Fell, with a thrill through his heart, felt them clasp him, while a sweet, dirty face was pressed against his, and a fresh mouth kissed his cheek.

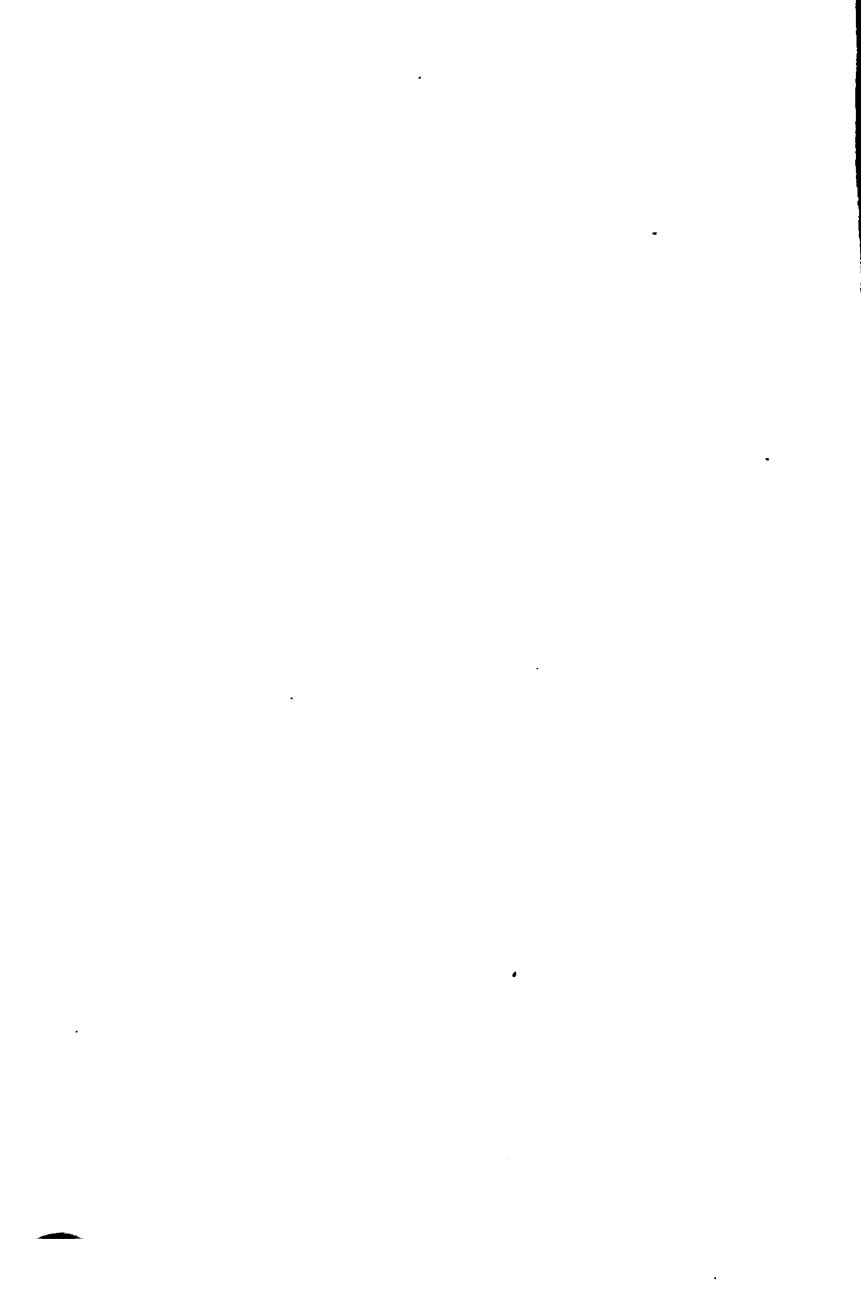
"I don't care if Uncle Nigel loves you or not; I love you—I love you," she whispered, and the tight clasp had to be unfastened by force to get her away.

Hardly could the doctor sleep that night for the memory of the touch which seemed to catch him over and over for hours after.

"Let me carry her into the house," begged Nigel, and the returning criminal opened her weighted lids, as the hall light fell on them to blink from her mother's face, racked but radiant, to that of the beloved uncle, and to know dimly that, after cycles of misery, all was again well with the world. Her mental grip was uncertain, and the good things that had crowded suddenly upon her, mingled, jumbled together.

"I—I think Kitty roped the trunk," the murderer whispered drowsily, and smiled at her mother. "Knows just as much as—as a damn white person," she murmured.

TAKI'S CAREER



TAKI'S CAREER

THE mistress of the house was having breakfast in bed while "neat-handed Phyllis"—named Ingeborg—moved about the room in a definite, noiseless fashion, creating freshness and order at each touch. The quiet, efficient ways of this little Scandinavian person were such as give thrills of joy to a house-keeper. A sprawling pink dressing-gown flew to its hook in the closet; bedroom slippers, kicked off at a ribald angle, came—toes together—to the bed; a half-open bureau drawer was closed; the shade of the window slid to the psychological soft-light distance; in about two minutes, without a word said, the room had lost its up-all-night expression and smiled with an air of conscious rectitude. I watched the transformation over my grapefruit—the mistress of the house was me.

In an army post, in a small ménage, perfect service is not common enough to be uninteresting; my heart gave a throb of gratitude as I reflected that I

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had two perfect servants. My staff consisted of two; so my cup of joy was full. Taki in the kitchen cooked divinely and decorated food as if each chop was broiled for the gods; potato roses bloomed above the beefsteak; lemon baskets of sauce tartare nestled in the arms of the fish—so to speak; the grapefruit was scalloped around the edges—I dislike unscaloped grapefruit since that time; and the floral effects which Taki achieved with strips of red pepper and a few green peas would astonish Burbank. I sat down to my meals as to a play. To be sure, a Japanese and a Swede made a Babelesque combination; to be sure, there was confusion of tongues at times, but that was not unamusing. To be sure, Taki was firm with me and simply sucked in his breath and did his own sweet way when I ordered what he thought unfit; but, then, he knew—knew better than I did. I ordered ice-cream; and Taki, without a word of explanation, gave me apple pie, and I bowed to his decree—but what joy it was to have a cook who had a decree! And doubtless apple pie was best for us—Taki knew.

And this lamb of a little Swede, trained and quiet

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and orderly—and so pretty ! She blushed and smiled and dropped her blue eyes if you spoke to her, and either answered nothing or hurriedly murmured sounds that no one could understand and fled from the room—which was inconvenient, but very winning. I taught her English to her unbounded gratitude; and between the two of them, the Japanese and the Swede, I was never out of stories to tell when I went anywhere to dinner. For four months the situation had made life another and a brighter proposition. I might have known it was one of the things too sweet to last. My first glimmering came vaguely, simply as an uncomfortable feeling.

“Dan,” I said to a large officer of the United States Army, whom I had once carelessly married, “there’s something wrong about those servants.”

“Wrong !” Dan shot back at me. “I thought you said they were perfect.”

“They are perfect,” I reasoned. “Of course. That’s what makes me anxious.”

Dan looked bewildered. “What do you mean ?”

“Well,” I told him, trying to put it clearly, “there’s an atinosphere.”

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Dan waited. I didn't say anything.

"What's an atmosphere?" he inquired finally. "What are you driving at, Cissy? I can't figure you out when you get occult, you know. Try it on in English."

"Well," I explained, "I've just got a hunch—that something or other is up some of their sleeves that's going to upset the heavenly, heavenly equilibrium of this house."

"Oh, rot!" Dan disposed of that. "You're stale from Münsterberg and that truck—bad thing, reading books. Jump into your habit and we'll get in a ride before dinner, and the servants will be all right when you come back. You'll see."

I did see. When we came in, late for dinner, I flew to the pantry to reassure my angels—and behold! the dark angel was kissing the fair one! I backed out hurriedly. Up-stairs I wailed to Dan:

"Now it's all spoiled! Now there'll be love-making and quarrels and tears and sulks and raptures—and then they'll get married. How can she! That pretty blond thing to marry that swarthy, black-headed—Ow!"

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"I've got black hair myself," Dan observed mildly.

"But you're big," I argued convincingly.

"And, anyhow, why should they be married just because he kissed her?"

"Dan! How horrid! Dear little Ingeborg!"

"Oh, well; but I have heard tell that the Swedes were general in their affections. I'm ready for dinner, Cissy. Hustle!" And at that second Ingeborg knocked—to hook me up.

Next morning, out of a relentless sense of duty, I spoke to Ingeborg. I told her it was not nice to be kissed—which was not just candid. Ingeborg hung her pretty head and flushed, and her blue eyes shone with bewitching shyness.

"Please excuse me, Mrs. Nellison; I was very sorry. I understand not it was not nice to be kissed. I think mebbly it was nice."

Then I screwed my courage to reprove Taki. The little erect figure stood at attention while I delivered my somewhat weak-kneed remarks; the impenetrable olive face moved not a muscle, the black eyes glittered respectfully just past me, till I had

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quite finished a wandering oration tending to show how it is unwise for Takis to kiss Ingeborgs in pantries. Then a lightning gleam of deviltry played across the mask.

"What it matters?" asked Taki. "It is only a Clistian." That battle I considered lost.

Next morning came my cousin Edgar, the judge—the youngest judge in the State. From the first minute he fixed Taki's attention. He was an intellectual-looking fellow in glasses, with an expansive, incisive manner of talking; and his air and his title fascinated the little Oriental. Taki managed to slip into the dining-room at almost every meal to help Ingeborg, his white coat and dark face making such a good point in the domestic landscape that I liked it. I saw that he listened to Edgar's harangues, but I had no thought of evil. He called him "Georgy" as the nearest he could get to "Judge." "Is Georgy comin' home lunch?" he inquired every morning; and, if Georgy was, whole flower-gardens of potato and carrot and beet roses bloomed upon the table and there were unexpected glories in the always glorious cookery.

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Edgar habitually rode a hobby, changing horses often, and just now his charger was the necessity to every man, woman, and infant in arms of a career. I don't know that any one denies it, but Edgar treated it as a discovery of his own. He held forth at the table one night and I saw Taki, transfixed, listening with tears running down his perfectly expressionless face. I tried to dam up the flood of Edgar then, but it was no use. He rushed right on in a torrent about "every human soul" and the intense satisfaction of "a goal"; and Taki stood in the shadows by the sideboard and wept continuously. Next morning I gave the orders as usual in my room, after my lazy up-stairs breakfast. Taki, alert, inscrutable, put his whole soul into the food question of the next twenty-four hours.

"For lunch, Taki—" I began.

Taki sucked in a long breath through his teeth. "Georgy comin' home lunch?"

"Yes; I think he is."

"I do lunch. I make good lunch. Madam order little lamb like this"—and he illustrated on his sacred person the part of the beast that he wished.

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Curry of lamb for lunch, I knew—and Taki made divine curries.

Then we arranged dinner, Taki, as always, lifting the whole menu off my shoulders.

“Any groceries needed?” I asked.

“Eggies,” answered Taki solemnly.

“Anything else?”

“Awpls,” impassively.

I learned through struggling that “awpls” were apples.

“Is that all?”

“Soup-bones poog and poops.” That was for the pug-dog and her puppies.

“Very well—anything more?”

Taki sucked in his breath again. He was an intensely nervous little person.

“Shoog, he go fast. Georgy like cake—like desert. Take much shoog. I must five poun’ gronlay shoog.”

Would the rank and file of mankind grasp that Taki’s economical soul was distressed because Edgar devoured sweet things and the granulated sugar did not last? I understood and assured him

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that I did not grudge "five poun' gronlay shoog" for Georgy's sake. That finished the ordering; but behold Taki stood rooted, instead of melting off down the hall as usual. I looked at him.

"Madam," said Taki, "I'm awfully sorry. Please I got to career."

"Oh, Taki," I pleaded, "don't career away from me!"

"I'm awfully sorry," Taki answered firmly. "Please, I got to. Georgy he say all man got to career to be respectful for heself. I wish to be respectful for me." He thumped his little chest. "So I got to career, please," he finished meekly and obstinately.

I could have taken Edgar's head off. I tried to make it clear to Taki that Georgy knew nothing and was just a talker, but he would not have that for a moment.

"Oh, no, madam," he said with a gleaming smile. "Georgy great man—big man! You know nothing, mebbe. Captain know nothing. But Georgy, he wise man—he Georgy. So I got to career," he reiterated.

I appealed to the mischief-maker and was met with

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roars of laughter. "It's not funny," I remonstrated. "It's battle, murder, and sudden death. I've never had such a servant. I simply cannot lose him. You did it. You go and talk to him—you all-knowing, all-wise——"

I shoved the mighty one into the kitchen. From thence I heard conversation steadily for half an hour. And then my cousin came back with his hands in his trousers pockets, shaking his head impressively. I danced anxiously all over the library.

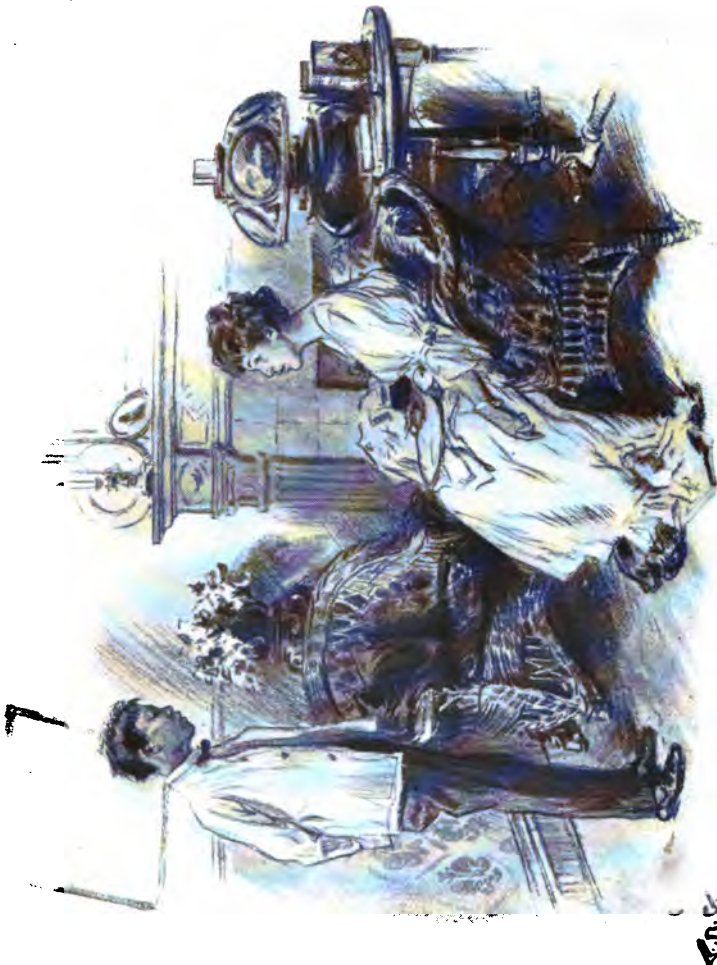
"What does he say? Will he stay?"

"They're an extraordinary race," the judge murmured. "Decision, then action—in instant succession. No palavering, no looking back—wonderful little people!"

My heart went down with an almost audible bang. "What do you mean, Edgar? Stop that footless meandering! I want to know if my cook is—going to leave!" I'm afraid I went crescendo.

"He is," was the answer, as calmly as if some old State had gone Democratic. "He is, indeed—extraordinary little people!"

"I hate you!" I fired at him and burst into tears.



"Madam," said Taki, "I'm awfully sorry. Please I got to career."

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In five minutes, after much if tardy remorse and sympathy from the man, I was swabbing away the last warm water from a sorrowful left eye.

"What is he going to ca-career at?" I asked gaspingly.

"We talked that over," said Edgar. "It quite touches me the way he defers to my judgment. I've never been more appreciated."

"Oh!—you!" I threw back. I was not placing a high value on the judge's self-esteem just now. "Appreciated! You've hypnotized the poor little lunatic with your eye-glasses. What calling did you advise him to follow?"

"He's going to be an undertaker," Edgar responded with some coldness.

"An undertaker!" I hooted with sudden, wild laughter. "An undertaker! Taki?"

Edgar proceeded with serious dignity. "There's a good business in the town to be bought out—it was in the paper. He's got savings and I'm going to lend him a little." Then, quickly, in a protesting answer to my speechless indignation: "Hang it all, Cecelia, you can't expect to smother a man in your kitchen!

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He's full of energy and ambition, that little bundle of live wire. You couldn't have kept him long anyway. You oughtn't to blame me. All I did was to hit the gunpowder by accident. The thing was bound to come!" And with that I was laughing. "What's struck you now?" the judge sulked.

"Taki!" I explained—"Taki in a frock coat and silk hat, running a funeral! He'll put potato roses on the corpses—and parsley!"

Through mediation from Georgy, Taki put off careering a week longer, until after that demigod had gone. The day before the departure the judge called a council of Dan and me and himself:

"I've had a great time," he began. "You've been awfully good to me. I was tired out—and I feel like a fighting-cock. I'm sorry about Taki, but I don't blame myself—a man can't help the influence he radiates. If I inspire people with a desire for bigger things——"

"For undertaking!" I interrupted.

"For—fuf—fine—for— Hang it, Cissy, you've made me forget what I was going to say!" he grumbled.

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Dan spoke from the depths of a chair and a big pipe.

"Thought you were going to say something special," he suggested. "Did you just want to tell us about your influence over Taki?" Dan was sorer than I at losing our cook. He loved Taki's cheese soufflés.

I had some sense of decency about a guest, however.

"Don't notice him, Edgar—he's been grouchy all day. You had something particular to say, though, hadn't you?"

"Well, yes." Edgar looked embarrassed; it is startling to see so fluent a person at a loss. We waited. "It's about—about Aunt Anna!"

"What about her?" Dan's pipe came down and sat erect on the chair arm, and Dan cocked his ears. Edgar hesitated again and I felt a cold chill—Aunt Anna's name was never a sound of gladness in the family. Then he launched out:

"You see, she's written, wanting to come to my house for the month of May; and—and I don't want her."

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"Who ever did?" Dan growled.

"Keep still!" I commanded. "We all agree—what's the use of slandering the old soul?"

"Old cat!" his Honor murmured. "But she's got bunches of money and I don't want to offend her. Yet I can't have her just now. She'd queer everything. The fact is, there's—a girl."

Nobody jumped, for there always had been a girl in the case of Georgy; not the same girl—far from it—but a girl, from the time he was fourteen.

"A girl!" I repeated languidly. "What has Aunt Anna got to do with the girl?"

"Very much." Edgar had become very dignified. "Or she may have. You see—I hope to marry this girl."

"Are you engaged, Edgar?" I waked up to a touch of proper interest.

"Well—not—not formally engaged." Edgar was rather trying to be coy, I thought. "But things are going on hopefully; and if Aunt Anna came and settled on me for a month—it's good-by! She'd make trouble enough in two days to break up any combination."

"But, Edgar, you know how agreeable she can

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be. She's very—plausible. That confidential, flattering manner—that's quite taking with people who don't know her."

The judge shook his head. "They get to know her. It takes her about twice and a half to set a dozen people by the ears. And things are so critical with me!" he wailed. "The girl's abroad now—comes back May 1—just Aunt Anna's date. If I had a little while then I might be happily settled for life—probably just in that month. And she is such a lovely girl! I want you to know her, Cissy—you and Dan, both."

Dan groaned.

"He means he thinks you're flirting again," I explained.

"No, indeed," Edgar protested. "This is a serious thing with me."

I'd heard him say that at least six times before, but yet he impressed me—Edgar's gift was impressing people. I began to feel sorry for him. "It is a shame Aunt Anna's coming just then," I sympathized. "But what can you do about it? Nothing can stop her. She's that sort."

"There's one thing could be done." Edgar looked

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at me so shamefacedly that I wonder I didn't comprehend. Instead, I rushed on destruction.

"Good," I said heartily. "Let's do it. What is it?"

"Cissy, you're a brick!" he threw at me, with almost tearful enthusiasm. "That's the sort of kindness that makes a man a friend for life. The thing is this: you write and ask Aunt Anna here for the month of May."

Dan's pipe went rattling on the floor. "Damn!" said Dan. "I like your nerve! She won't do anything of the sort—not while I'm alive to protect her. We had that old devil once—and so hellep me Moses —"

"Oh, stop it, Dan," I said. "And 'protect' me! Protect Danny, I reckon. Let me think it out."

The men-folks lapsed into respectful silence while I worked my brain. I knew I had to have Aunt Anna sometime soon—the family took turns at martyrdom and it was fully my time; it was five years since she had blessed our home. May was a good time. I could ride and be out of doors and away from her purring, stabbing tongue much of the time.

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And why not do Edgar a good turn? On the whole, it seemed best to face the music.

"Danny, don't argue," I pleaded; and I set the case before him.

He groaned and gave in, as a pampered man mostly does. That is the advantage of pampering them—it gives a leeway for abusing them when necessary. So Georgy went off next morning in high spirits and left me to battle with Taki's going and Aunt Anna's coming. My olive angel spread his wings shortly and flew to a lugubrious small shop in the main street of the town where a brand-new sign of "Sakisuki Takiuchi, Undertaker," appeared. Before he left, however, he introduced into the kitchen another little heathen who, though not the great and only, was not so bad. Instructed by the outgoing Buddha, he scalloped the grapefruit. Taki's fatherly care was over the house and his spry little figure about it almost as much as before; I found him in the kitchen, often working away busily, evening after evening, and life did not stop utterly as had seemed inevitable. I asked Ingeborg how she liked the newcomer, and she said: "He is

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not so favorite to me like Taki, but he is virtuous man." So I thought he would do.

That was in March, and soon it came to be April; and we were settled to the reign of Tanaka and jogging along fairly when one morning Ingeborg, as she slipped about my room, was somewhat quieter, a little slower. I looked at her. The blue eyes were circled with red.

"Ingeborg, you've been crying!"

"Yes, Mrs. Nellison."

"I'm so sorry. Is anything wrong?"

"Y-e-s," tremblingly, "Mrs. Nell—" The rest was a respectful gulp and Ingeborg made a dash for the door; but I caught her with a word.

"Tell me what it is, Ingeborg," I urged. "Maybe I can help you."

"Oh!—Oh, no!" the girl sobbed. "Oh, nobody can help!"

"Do tell me what it is."

Ingeborg dabbed at her eyes and brought out a staccato "T-Ta-ki!"

"Taki!" I was astonished, then indignant. "Has Taki been kissing you again?"

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"Y-e-yes, Mrs. Nellison."

"The little wretch!" I said indignantly. "I'll have that stopped, Ingeborg—don't you worry."

"Pup-please, no, Mrs. Nellison."

"No!" I repeated. "Do you want him to kiss you?"

"Pup-please, yes, Mrs. Nellison."

I lost my sympathy. "Then, what are you crying about?"

Ingeborg, in agonized embarrassment, wriggled. "Taki going get married," she stammered.

"He is!" Again I was indignant and sympathetic. The little yellow rascal had wiled the heart from my pretty Ingeborg and now he was going to throw her over! I was boiling with resentment. "Who is he going to marry?"

"Me," sobbed Ingeborg.

The plot was too complicated for me. I sent for Taki that evening. He came, glorious in his professional little frock coat, his little silk hat in his hand—such a note of darkness as would decorate any grief.

"Taki," I said, "are you going to marry Ingeborg?"

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"Madam, I do it," he acknowledged.

"I thought you said she was only a Christian," I suggested, with malice.

"Madam, I got tender nature—me. I forgive Clistian to Igglebo. Igglebo good gyarl—she don't know better to be Clistian. I forgive. I want some kinder wife—me. I cannot suffer alone."

"Do you suffer much?" I inquired.

"I got tender nature; so I suffer—yes, madam. I suffer on yesterday."

"You did? That was why Ingeborg was crying? You didn't suffer alone?"

"No, madam. Igglebo suffer along me—she good gyarl. I always make suffer along me."

"What were you suffering about yesterday?"

"Madam, I have bad luck—me. I have nice foonra'—first big nice foonra' I get. I want to do nice, that foonra'. Then I do all careful—so careful, madam; so pretty, like party. I think I make great name, dat foonra'—get more foonra'—make money—marry Igglebo soon quick. So I got all things nice and many carriage—twenty carriage—go four mile in country to cemeter'. The carriage

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go slow and all peop' look at nice foonra'. It take more one hour to go dat cemeter'. We get gate, and when we get inside big gate of cemeter' I find I forget bring dat corp'!"

Taki's face was as masklike as ever, but the glittering eyes were swimming and tears were running down his olive cheeks.

"S'pose I get nerv'," Taki explained resignedly, wiping a tear or two. "I got go back four mile get that corp'—peop' get mad! I suffer."

I didn't laugh. Nobody could. "I'm so sorry, Taki," I said, and comforted him with platitudes. And I wondered, as I thought of the tale, if Taki's career really lay along the lines he and Georgy had selected.

The career, however, was thrown into the background by a family event—the 1st of May and Aunt Anna arrived hand in hand. Aunt Anna was a large maiden lady, shapeless, impressive, talkative, mischief-making, rich. She was entirely up to date. She smoked, she consumed cocktails, she ate heavy, rich meals against her doctor's orders. She had a finished, flattering, and frivolous address which at-

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tracted the unwary, and she mostly managed to do some damage before the unwary waked up. She had collected many jewels, but little affection. I shouldered her manfully and gave lunches and teas for her; and other people did, too, for she was always a prominent person. And between times I took long rides to get the world simplified and cleared.

On a day, May 17, I cantered slowly through the post, coming in from a ride alone—and Marion Wilder came out from her house and stopped me. I was surprised, for Marion had been offish lately—I couldn't tell why, but suspected Aunt Anna's manipulations. I drew my horse up and saw she looked troubled.

"Anything wrong, Marion?"

She went red and stared at me in a queer way.

"Yes; I thought—I thought I'd just give you a hint before—you got home. It's—so sudden—to get home."

"Marion! For heaven's sake! What is it?" Then an awful chill struck me. "Not Dan?"

"Oh, no! It's your aunt! She's been taken ill."

I am ashamed to say I sighed with relief.

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"Thank you, old girl." I put out my hand. "It was good of you. I'll get there quickly." But Marion held my fingers.

"You didn't say I caught cold hanging out of my window waiting for Captain Nelson to pass, did you?"

"I did not," I fired at her. "Did that old—" I forgot she was ill. "But I never said it and never would on earth—or in eternity."

Marion gave me a long-distance pat, for The Mouse was backing off. "Good!—you're a brick, Cissy! Hurry along home. I'll be over to see if I can help."

Poor Aunt Anna had eaten one heavy meal and taken one cocktail too many. Two days later, on Wednesday, she died. Thursday Dan came in to lunch after a morning of hard and grewsome "arrangements," for Aunt Anna was to be sent back to be laid with her forebears, the Phelps family, in the East—and it was complicated.

"Cissy"—he began at his third chop—"you've got to subdue Sakisuki Takiuchi. Major Williams died yesterday and Taki's got that job too—and

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his joy is indecent. He thinks he's solemn, but he's perfectly radiant—you talk to him."

I did, and managed to soften the glitter and glow of his manner to limits.

"Two large nice foonra', madam! Me, I got be glad. I not glad peop' die—no; oh, no—that too bad; but if they got die I like bury 'em. That nice. Yes, madam, I try act like I sorry like you say. I try look like I suffer. But I glad inside me." Such was the result of my few remarks.

Thursday afternoon we had a short service and afterward everything was given into Taki's charge; and the little man was shivering with nervous anxiety to do his very best. Dan wore a queer, strained grin—not mirthful—as the short procession drove from our door.

"If there isn't a case of Japanese brain-fever in town, then excitement won't do it. The major's body is down at his place also, you know. It's a good deal for him to manage, and he feels it."

That night Dan went down to the 8.20 train East and helped Taki send away with all possible reverence what he chose to call "Captain's foonra'." Dan reported him bursting with vainglory over two

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such functions and most anxious to give details of the last sad rites of the major yet to come—but there Dan drew a line.

Two days later, as I sat at my window, I saw the long, soldierly procession file solemnly past; the officers in uniform, my Dan big and stately among them; the hearse; the major's horse, with the empty cavalry boots hung top-down from the saddle. Then I saw peering out at our house from the last carriage a little, dark expressionless face, its black eyes glittering under the silk top-hat—the master of ceremonies, Sakisuki Takiuchi, trying to “look like he suffer.”

That afternoon late I heard Dan's latch-key in the door and instantly his step on the stair. The sound of that step arrested my needle in mid-air. Something was wrong; there was an unaccustomed hurry and agitation in Dan's step—and with that he was at the door. One gets to interpret a man's face in a general way pretty truthfully when one sees it every day for years, but this look was beyond me. There was a mixture of horror and laughter which defied any rough-and-ready theory.

“What is it, Dan?” I threw at him. And promptly

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he threw at me a yellow paper with a few words on it—a telegram. I read it. “Dan!—Dan!” I gasped; and even in that moment I was conscious that I had caught just his mixture—horror and laughter. In a second I had my arms round his neck and was hiding my face from my own feelings, whatever they were—and they were a very sad jumble. Dan was shaking like a reed in the wind—I have never asked him the psychology of that shakiness.

After a while I sat down. Then I cried a little. Then I gasped: “Oh, Dan!” Then: “What are we going to do?” I picked up the telegram. “Why, we’ve got to do something quick! It’s an awful situation! What can we do?”

Dan considered. “Only one thing.” He caught up his hat. “I’ll go and send a telegram.” And he was gone before I had come to enough to ask a question.

In twenty minutes he was back and then I had my question ready before he got inside the door.

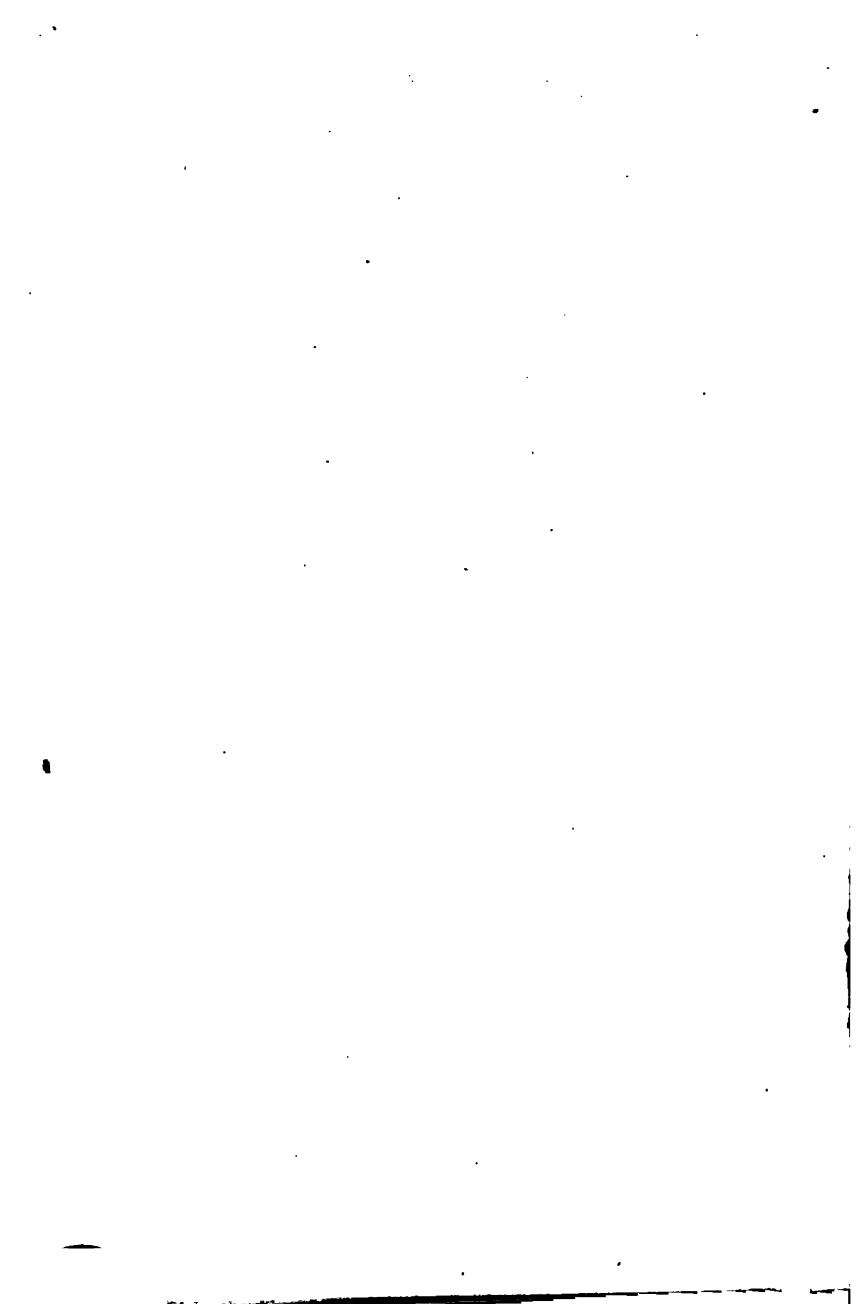
“What did you say? What did you say, Dan?” I demanded in italics.

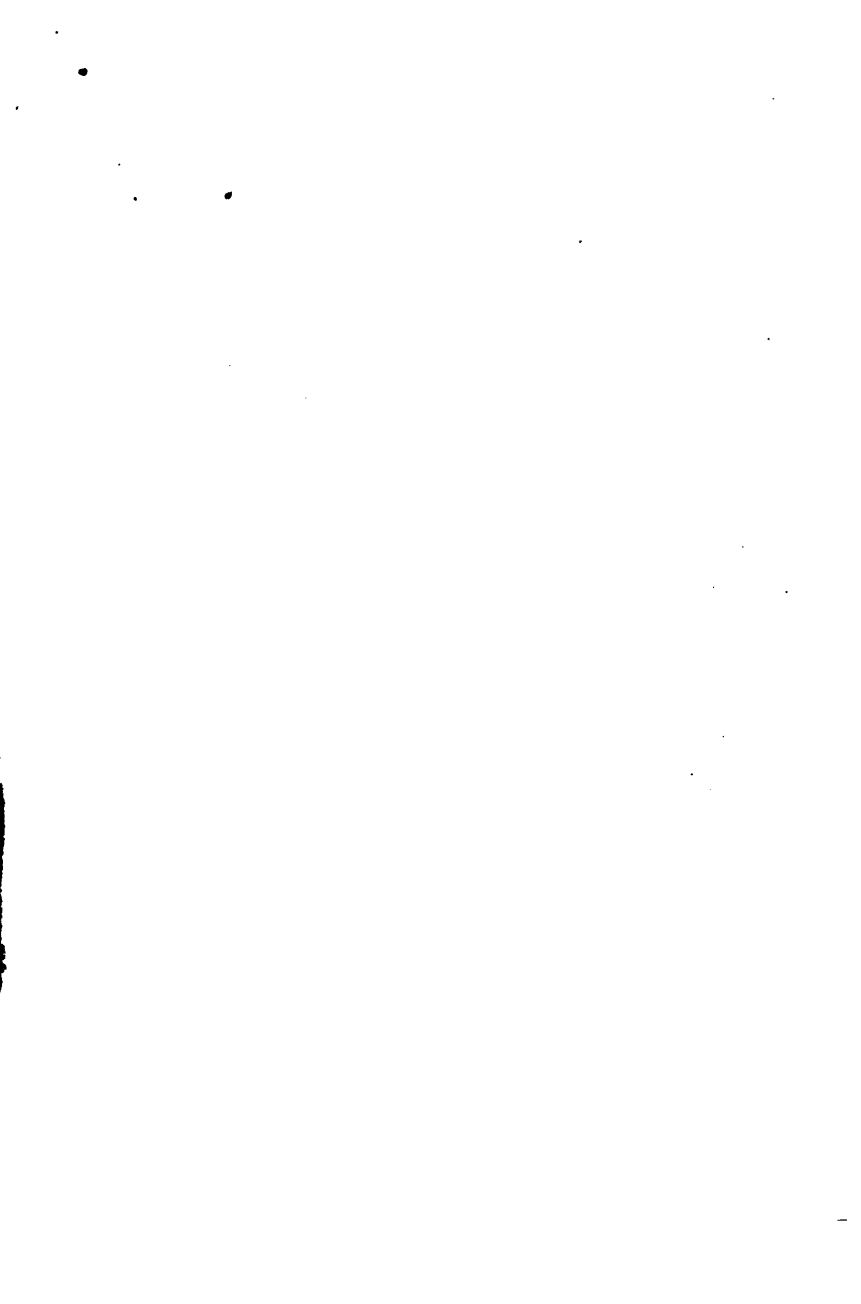
Dan fished a scrawled bit of paper out of his pocket. “I kept a copy. I knew you’d want to know

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the words"—and I snatched the scrawl. At the window, by the light of the darkening day, I read it. It ran thus:

"Bury the major!" Dan had telegraphed to the Phelps—"Bury the major as quietly as possible! Aunt Anna buried this morning with full military honors!"

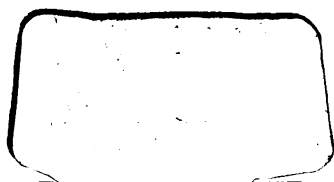




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